

WOMEN
AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

TO
MY WOMEN FRIENDS
ON BOTH SIDES OF THE
ATLANTIC, WHETHER THEY
AGREE WITH ME OR NOT

WOMEN

AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

BY
RICHARD CURLE

And yet, believe me, good as well as ill,
Woman's at heart a contradiction still.

POPE, *Moral Epistles*

Women have three sets of eyes. In
their fingers for curtains and stuffs. In
the backs of their heads for their back
hair. And all over them for any other
woman.

CARY, *The Horse's Mouth*

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INTRODUCTION

THE title of this book may be regarded, not without reason, as comprehensive to the pitch of absurdity. For it is plain that no thirty-two chapters ever written, or ever to be written, even assuming the highest standard of insight, could unbare the whole heart of woman, and that, indeed, there is much in femininity beyond the analysis of words. Still, a book has to have a title (an engaging one, if available), and I can only hope that what I have said does, with some effect, blaze a trail towards a better comprehension of women as a class—at least, from the male angle. If “A Guide for Men” be taken as an appropriate unused half-title I shall be satisfied.

My subject being, by its very nature, inexhaustible, there are, of course, numerous aspects of feminine psychology on which I have touched but lightly, if at all. Think, for instance, of the enormous part curiosity plays in motivating women’s thoughts and actions, of the enraged humiliation induced by a dawning sense of failure, of the angel and the tigress hidden in the maternal instinct, of the haunting dread of time, of the twilit region of sex inhibitions and repressions. And there are various other aspects—such as the extremism and the realism of women, their tendency to misuse power, their swift and minute observation, their personal approach to every being and every question, their self-protective impulses, and their peculiar interpretation of logic—which enter so deeply into the fabric of many chapters that I have not deemed it necessary to devote special consideration to them under separate headings. Again, there are numbers of traits and emotions which, because they are not predominantly feminine although they influence women, I have not elaborated. For example, amorality as an explanation of conduct in both sexes; misread personality, with the embittering results enlightenment brings; marital jealousy in all its tortuous and tortured branches; the supple

art of seduction known alike to those who practise it and those on whom it is practised ; the feeling of bewildered loss from the slow waning of love ; the sudden perception in men and women that their relationship has reached a critical turn, a perception so profound in its very unspokenness that everybody seems immediately aware of the change. And all these are only a selection of themes. Altogether, nothing would have been simpler than to have written a much longer volume, but one has to placate both publishers and public and bring books to a close before one's chances of a hearing grow too dim.

I did not find it very easy to arrange a suitable order for the chapters, though the first and the last come naturally where they do and others fall clearly enough into groups. Each was composed as an entity, with an eye on the basic scheme, and as they all discuss diverse features of the same problem, it is, I suppose, almost inevitable that there should be some overlapping and perhaps even contradiction. As for the overlapping, it cannot be helped, for a similar argument may have cogency in more than one direction ; and as for the contradiction, well, women are so full of contradictions themselves that it really appears to be inescapable. From different standpoints praise or disparagement may be applied to the same characteristics, and in the process of developing one thesis after another the stresses tend, involuntarily, to alter. In any case, individual experience and individual taste are likely to influence one's judgment. Who could be coolly neutral in his every remark about women, especially when any true knowledge of them depends on meeting so many opposed personalities ?

A good deal of trouble was spent in finding a few more or less appropriate quotations to accompany each chapter. Some of the chapters lent themselves readily to this, and I was often inclined to multiply the quotations ; but others were not so obliging, and I was rather hard put to it to fill the gaps, especially as books of quotations, though very helpful, have *their* gaps and I have too often forgotten to mark apposite passages in books I have read. Of course, I might have avoided quotations altogether, but it is always helpful, as Vauvenargues declared, to have one's own

opinion fortified by another's—though I admit that not all of my quotations fulfil this need—and anyhow the searching for them was fun and the employment of them has enlivened the text. Many, no doubt, could be improved upon, but that was implicit in the attempt.

Talking of quotations, I toyed with the idea of giving in every chapter the names of novels and plays whose feminine characters would represent, with a certain force, the particular phase I was discussing. But apart from the fact that my reading is not as wide as it might be, I came to the conclusion that though this could sometimes be accomplished quite aptly, at other times I would have had to press characters into niches which they only partially fitted. And, naturally, many of the celebrated female figures of fiction and drama would be ranged in opposite camps from mine and I could have made my points only by an unfair selectiveness. The whole thing, though entertaining, would have been too lop-sided, and despite temptation, I have not mentioned a single novel or play throughout, save those from which I drew quotations, though I *have* mentioned some authors and a few characters. I suggest therefore that readers should use their own circle of female acquaintances by which to judge of the soundness or otherwise of my observations. But there, again, the test might be imperfect.

To make each chapter of approximately the same length seemed to me called for in my method of presentation. For once headings have been given to them who is to decide which are the more significant, when all are intended to build up a picture that, however incomplete, is meant to be recognizable? For none of the chapters deals entirely with its ostensible topic, and in each of them may be found links with others. Even though self-contained, they are inter-related.

But while such a method has its advantages, it also has its disadvantages. By concentrating on one factor at a time it was possible to wind into—or skate over?—it more thoroughly than if it had been only touched on in a general discussion; and yet, by so doing—by offering, as it were, a formal treatment—it was sometimes as if the soul of woman had slipped out, sinuous and unperceived, from between the lines: one could almost hear a

mocking laugh. The truth is that while we cannot exaggerate the complexity of a woman's mind, we can readily exaggerate the depth of specific emotions in particular instances. In fact, one may be delving away to one's happy content while the real motive, divorced from its obscure chain of causation, may be altogether missed. But, then, the personality of woman is beyond any pinning down, and I console myself for mistakes by thinking that, however the book had been written, much of the vital essence would have escaped me.

Finally, I would like to explain that this is not an anti-feminine treatise, even if it does tend to be pro-man. All the same, my wish, within the scope of the governing intention, was to be just, although I dare say the bias keeps peeping out; one must not expect miracles. Above all, one can see things only within the orbit of one's own limited vision. But, I repeat, the book in substance is not a criticism, it is a study. And if, in some of my chapters, I have said hard things about women, I am quite well aware—indeed, I frequently mention it—that equally hard things could be said about men. Moreover, in such a book as this one tends to dwell on the types that surprise and the traits that disconcert, for by so doing one hopes to gain, through extremes, an insight into certain fundamentals more often than not muted in the individual.

Obviously this is not the sort of book a woman would have written, but nobody could have expected that. It was bound to be masculine and controversial, and should any woman write a rejoinder—and there is plenty of room—that, in its turn, is bound to be feminine and controversial. One sex is no more impartial, and perhaps no more accurate, about itself than about the other, and if men are prejudiced in a masculine, women are prejudiced in a feminine, direction. In my view, any set of opinions on the psychology of sex, enunciated either by man or woman, is sure to contain both truth and falsehood, both understanding and ignorance. How could it be otherwise with a subject in which there can be no absolute values?

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CHAPTER I

THE WOMAN QUESTION

WHY is there a Woman Question and not a Man Question ? The feminist would answer, I suppose, that there is a Woman Question because women have always had to fight for their rights, and that there is not a Man Question because men have always had everything they want.

But my feeling is that this is far too narrow a definition. For the last century and a half, I grant, the phrase has taken on a special significance, but the Woman Question existed long before women's rights were envisaged and will continue to exist long after women have obtained more rights than men. In fact, it exists primarily because women, on account of their physical and nervous composition, have developed characters and minds of a caste that raises endless problems to which there are no satisfactory solutions. The real Woman Question is not feminism; it is femininity : How are women to manage their lives in face of men's superior strength and stability, how are they to appease those yearnings which men cannot even be got to appreciate ?

As for the absence of a Man Question, I incline to the view, as a surface answer, that men are too busy in the material affairs of the world to allow themselves that sort of luxurious introspection of which women are so fond. Doubtless if they possessed temperaments analogous to those of women nothing would prevent men from being as introspective, but even as things are it would be quite easy for them to brood over their lot until they produced a Man Question, had they not so much to do. For men also have their special complaints against life, but they are so intent on their tasks and happy in their hobbies that they do not bother about those complaints to the point of making them an issue between themselves and women. Of course, they do have some obvious advantages, but these very advantages lead to obligations of so

grave and exhausting a kind that they often envy women their particular privileges.

I am not suggesting that either men or women would ever allow their grievances to swamp for long the normal satisfaction of their mutual relationship, for most people try to conduct themselves reasonably; all I intend to convey is that women instinctively encourage the vitality of the Woman Question, recruiting the younger generation to their permanent crusade, while men instinctively discourage the formation of a Man Question.

This is no marked credit to men, who feel at ease with themselves, whereas in the essence of a woman's soul there is a conflict. In creating the female one might say that Nature could not help creating a riddle; and in creating the male—who, biologically speaking, is, I believe, later in the scale—that she meant to create her complement. But, if so, the job was bungled; the male, if complementary to the female in a physical sense—though there are degrees even in this—is not altogether complementary in a mental sense. Thus both sexes, despite their reliance upon each other, remain eternally estranged in the very direction where peace might be found.

I dare say this attempt at an explanation will only confuse the issue, but that is a way explanations have. One has floating ideas which, whether sound or unsound, suggest the answer to an enigma; but when one comes to put them on paper they have a trick of losing their outline, never perfectly clear, in a haze of generalities. All one can hope is that the thoughts do somehow manage to struggle through the words.

I do not know whether it was a man or a woman who coined the phrase, "The Woman Question," but I do know that if it were not for men's intense and undying interest in women it would soon cease to have its present importance. For men, whether women enchant or irritate them, are everlastingly thinking about them and asking themselves how they can make the association function satisfactorily. Almost everything depends on the manner in which women will react; and for a man, therefore, the Woman Question is the question of how women are to be assuaged.

Or rather, that is the shape it takes in his lighter moments, when he is trying to shelve the deeper implications by ignoring them. In reality, he knows that what passes for the Woman Question in the newspapers is seldom the Woman Question as it affects him. The granting to women of everything they have fought for during the last fifty years has not abolished the Woman Question, for the simple reason that it has not abolished women. It has only skimmed some of the froth from the surface of their discontent. The Woman Question is bound up with the inexhaustible question of what actually goes on in women's brains, and if in the chapters which follow I have tried to give some answers, I am aware that, after everything has been discussed, women remain just about as inscrutable as ever.

For, as I observed previously, the mental evolution of women has not, in some manner too subtle for exact definition, followed the same course as the mental evolution of men. This comes to men as a perennial surprise, and they never quite take for granted what, by now, they ought to take for granted. The differences of sex and temperament are allowed for, but there are obscurer differences—differences of conduct and outlook, differences in the very approach to existence—which men never fully grasp, although their workings lie all about them.

And this is no new discovery, the outcome of modern perceptions or advanced inquiries into the nature of the ego; it is as old as the hills. Mankind has always been confronted by this puzzle, and the story of Adam and Eve is mainly a fable on the power of woman to gain her ends by devious measures and to mould man to her wishes against his better judgment. The Woman Question was, I am afraid, active in the Garden of Eden, and I suspect that Adam spent much of his time endeavouring in vain to circumvent the wiles of Eve. The Serpent, whom Eve accused of tempting her, was only a figment of her imagination, a fictitious demon on whom she could throw the blame when things began to go badly. She had set her heart on tasting of the fruit which was the knowledge of good and evil—that is to say, on experiencing everything there was to experience and on gratifying her insatiable curiosity—and therefore she saw to it that Adam tasted of it too. The soul

of woman, as drawn by the ancients, is ironically unveiled before us in this fairy tale of the first woman.

The problem was already there, the abstruse problem of women's psychology, and it threads its trail, not only through history as we know it, but also through those classical myths that have come down to us in the guise of epic and folklore. The Woman Question, to which we ourselves have given a local colour, has been bemusing man since the beginning of time and will continue to bemuse him until time is no more.

Woman has, in the nature of her being, an infinite capacity for producing an unrest which can rock us to our foundations and change the aspect of everything. Her might ranges beyond the usual frontiers of her sex, and to regard women solely as females is to miss their double-edged potency. They are trouble-makers, not, they would hold, because they want to make trouble, but because by making it they stir men out of their easy-going, pleasure-loving sloth. One can never really disregard women, for their influence is never really far away. As Alexandre Dumas has it in *Les Mohicans de Paris* (the pithiness is lost in translation and the French has a flavour all its own): "Cherchez la femme!" Why has this phrase become so famous, why does it conjure up a specific idea? The answer is that it presents, with matchless brevity, the truth that women are at the root of all human affairs. Sex jealousy is only the obvious meaning indicated, and it is false to give the words a merely suggestive or contemptuous significance. Their ultimate meaning is altogether devoid of that species of innuendo.

The average sensual man would like to regard woman as a perpetual excitement and solace, someone to be admired and petted, someone to minister to his needs and enliven his solitude; but, shallow as he may be, he knows that all this is only the fringe of the subject. The main purpose of life is shot through and through with cross-purposes, and the more he seeks for harmony, the more does it escape him as a will-o'-the-wisp. The glib smirk does not outlast the casual encounter, and though, like a luckless moth, he asks to be singed, he does not want to be hurt. But through all the stages of fulfilment there runs a streak of pain

and perplexity, and the Woman Question looms ever larger as a thing which, with its tentacles and entanglements, has to be accepted as part of the vast and confusing adventure of living.

After all, it is quite comprehensible that sex, which performs the crowning mystery of creation, should be mysterious in its every phase. As it brings new life on to the earth, so it animates the life already there. It is indeed astonishing to what an extent sex interpenetrates the activities of existence. Where would men's ambition be without women; what would happen to the male if he had only himself to think of? Self-answering questions of this sort serve the purpose of suggesting wider questions. From time immemorial the dynamic energies of men have been fired by the static electricity of women. If Helen's face could launch a thousand ships and Cleopatra make her lover immortal by a kiss, these are but instances from the age-old story of woman's sovereign dominion. Neither right nor wrong enters into it; sex alone enters into it. And the feminine sex can never divulge its innermost secrets, because the secrets are its aura. From one angle the Woman Question is a question without an answer.

Yes, even for women. They do not see clearly into their own natures, although they feel indignant at the blindness of men. If man be their complement, why cannot man make everything plain? And even if he does answer some of their problems, why must he leave others, not only unanswered, but positively unperceived? Women are for ever groping in their minds for an enlightenment which for ever eludes them. Perhaps they feel, as the saying is, that the truth would make them free; but perhaps in feeling this they ask themselves whether, if the truth *were* revealed, their freedom in one direction would not be more than offset by a stricter bondage in another. The complexity of their spirit may be a torment, but probably, despite the perturbed thoughts and extremist acts it brings in its train, it is also a safeguard. If there had been no Woman Question women might, after the manner of Voltaire's remark about God, have been forced to invent one.

A man seldom feels so completely comfortable with a woman that he forgets to buttress his lack of insight by caution. Yet

he is conscious that his very carefulness not to offend may be a cause of offence—women avoid men who watch their steps too diligently, though artistic displays of tact are welcome—and therefore, while keeping his weather eye open, he often plays the bluff male when he is feeling anything but bluff. In his heart he considers that women ought to be simpler than they make themselves out, but he is aware that that is a fatal attitude to adopt.

And women at times respond by being more openly feminine and illogical than they want to be. Thus through a sort of nervous dread a man and a woman can draw apart by emphasizing characteristics they could readily tone down. Each knows that the other has fixed, and sometimes false, ideas about the opposite sex; but it frequently appears wisest on both sides to let things continue along the lines of least resistance. Thus the intricacy of the relationship is liable to be accentuated and people, instead of concentrating on each other's personalities, concentrate on each other's sex. And this, I fancy, is even truer of women than of men, for it is women who set the pace. A man cannot tear off a woman's mask when it has been assumed on purpose, but a woman can usually tear off a man's. Or perhaps it is only that a woman can live herself into a part more successfully than can a man—so successfully, indeed, that her real self becomes submerged.

The truth is there is a kind of permanent contradiction about women. They are more elemental than men, in that they are closer to nature; but they are more tangled up than men, in that they are always waging a war. And the fact that many women attempt to enhance their mystery by trading on their femininity does not abolish their femininity. One might as well argue that an actress who has to impersonate an unscrupulous adventuress on the stage cannot be an unscrupulous adventuress in real life or that a lady novelist who stresses her femininity when writing about her heroine's emotions is not discernibly feminine when writing about anything.

Many other women, on the contrary, revolt against the tyranny of their instincts and would echo with Winifred Holtby, in one of her letters to Vera Brittain, quoted in *Testament of Friendship*: "I am a feminist because I dislike everything that feminism implies.

I desire an end of the whole business ; the demands for equality, the suggestion of sex warfare, the very name of feminist." But straightforward as these remarks are, may they not imply that feminism ought to cease because its claims ought to be acknowledged? Yet how can this happen until men and women see things in the same light? And how can men and women ever do that? The Jacobins yearned to inaugurate the reign of universal brotherhood and love, but unfortunately anybody who disagreed with them—and it was very difficult to do anything else—was an enemy who had to be destroyed.

The real Woman Question is, broadly, the question of her adjustability to the whole panorama of existence. Woman's place in the social scheme changes, but it always remains profoundly different from the place of man, if not outwardly, at heart, and therefore it will always seem unfair to women. For women as a class suffer from a sense of inferiority, not about themselves, but about their sex, and because of this they are convinced that they ought to be given an enormously exalted status. This may not be their declared goal, but it lurks vaguely in the background of their minds. They demand a recognition far beyond the ordinary claims of equality, but as they know it to be useless even to formulate such a demand, they nurse their grudge in secret.

No woman is ever fully content for long ; her every step forward falls short of total vindication and in her supremest triumphs there is a whisper of failure. She is convinced she will never receive the justice that is her due ; and this, perhaps, is why she takes up various movements with such intensity. She *must* express herself, she *must* compel men to treat her seriously, and she is, in consequence, apt to become almost hysterical in her frantic efforts to make her influence felt.

And all the time, with the more scheming part of her brain, she also knows that she has to use her femininity to her immediate advantage and not allow men to suspect the full scope of her dreams. Here again her motives are, in the main, unselfconscious ; but nevertheless these motives, as the sheets of a palimpsest, can be stripped off one after the other until we reach the innermost, unexpected core. Men are essential to her well-

being, and, in giving out, she receives. But beneath all that, beneath the emotional gratification and the feeling of security, there lurk the unanswerable challenges : Why are we in this position and men in that, what have we done to be treated so by fate ? And beneath *that*, quite outside the realm of thought, she is handicapped in her reasoning by the incalculable quality of womanhood itself, the innate, strange quality of her femininity, which drapes her every act and thought as with a mist, shutting her away, whether she wishes it or not, from men's understanding.

As I have suggested, the Woman Question can be given almost any meaning one chooses to select, but basically it is a dumb protest which coils into all sorts of obscure by-paths and dark alleys. But women should blame Nature, not man ; man is only the instrument, not the cause, of her quarrel with life.

CHAPTER II

WOMEN IN LOVE

LOVE is so multifarious an agitation, lending itself to analysis in such countless directions, that, following Stendhal's example, one could write a lengthy treatise upon it without beginning to exhaust its ramifications. But my purpose here is limited: I want to do little more than describe briefly some of the changes that occur in a woman's soul when she is in love.

Outwardly—for men and women are born to come together for weal or woe—the effect on a woman may be very much the same as on a man, depending on character and chance for the range of its possibilities; but as, by their nature, women have to be stirred out of the passive into the receptive, their revelation is more intense. Of course, there are millions of shallow women, the equivalent of the millions of shallow men; but even in the shallowest there generally lingers some memory which cannot be effaced, and even in the most frivolous there is almost always the capacity, however starved, both for the rapture and for the self-sacrifice of devotion.

Although a girl visualizes, and visualizes spontaneously, falling in love as part of her heritage as a woman, yet the actual process is usually a rather devastating surprise. The lover of her imagination is seldom the lover of reality, and if, when the clock strikes, the note is unmistakable (despite those panic-stricken moments practically every woman experiences before marriage), as often as not it finds her unprepared. She is better at gauging a man's feelings than her own because, brought up to be suspicious of the male approach, she has an instinctive tendency to shrink from the unknown and to stifle the first warnings in her breast. Indeed, a girl often fights against love and even resents it. Thus it frequently happens that she cultivates a sort of artificial coldness, or even dislike, for the man with whom she is on the point of falling in love and will not acknowledge to herself the

change creeping over her. Or it may be that the intuitive coyness of the courted female mingles with her distrust of men in general and causes her to display an indifference which, without being exactly a pose, has an element of falseness in it.

But when she does capitulate, her capitulation is all the more complete in that she has been trained to curb her emotions and conceal her thoughts. Beneath a woman's protective cloak of caution and restraint there lies the directness of her primitive nature—a fundamental directness which may go hand in hand with a personal aloofness—and once she has made her decision she does not count the cost. That doubt of herself, which is by no means uncommon in a woman, is transfigured by love into a boundless faith in life, and on setting forth upon the hazard of marriage she feels that she is strong enough to mould destiny to her desire.

And just as a woman in love knows no half-measures in giving, so she wants to be accepted without half-measures. Amiel got near the heart of woman when he wrote in his *Journal*: "Women wish to be loved without a why or a wherefore; not because they are pretty and good, or intelligent, but because they are themselves." For what a woman craves in her lover is for him to understand and appreciate something about her that nobody else has ever really understood or appreciated—that something which is her real self and has been lying dormant, as one might say, awaiting the breath of vitalization. As, in her exalted state, she is ready to take the plunge, so does she ask of the man who loves her to be ready for her sake, shorn of all extraneous advantages or disadvantages of looks or personality, to take the plunge.

She yearns for his honeyed words and for his promises of felicity, not because she thinks herself remarkable or is more ingenuous than another, but because they seem to complete that in her which, being hitherto incomplete, has prevented her true self from emerging; and because she longs to be accepted as fully as she accepts, she welcomes the risks of existence with the same fervour with which she once avoided them. Her own solemn oaths leave her no loophole of escape; but, then, she no more wants to escape their consequence at the time than, later on, she

feels necessarily in the faintest degree bound by them. To be loved by the man she loves makes everything authentic; not to be loved by him makes everything bootless. Nor must we forget that in a woman's promises there is sometimes the hint of an emotional threat: "If you love me I am reckless; if you cease to love me I am reckless." The double note *can* be there.

A woman stakes more on giving than does a man, and yet she burns her boats behind her with an impetuous gesture, for, being an extremist—and, if one comes to think of it, having a baby is just about as extreme a thing as anybody could do—she gains final satisfaction only by total surrender. Nature had to make sex attractive to assure the continuation of the species, and love, which is sex etherealized, had, one may assume, to be made urgent in order that people might embark upon matrimony. Of course, this is much too naïve a way of putting it, but it will serve. When one considers the appalling trials and perplexities of life, it may be doubted whether many would hold it desirable in itself were not romance and passion the supreme factors in its creation.

This, however, is beside the point, not alone because it goes beyond my subject, but because, though women rationalize their love, they rationalize it in quite a different direction. For love fashions in a woman's consciousness the assurance that through it alone she is invincible. Material difficulties cease to exist, and warnings against her future husband's habits or character give her no qualms. There is nothing she cannot accomplish: her conquering love will cure his drunkenness, her devouring affection rehabilitate him in society. The old story! And even if he be moody and distant with her and exhibit boredom in her company, she is convinced that once she has him all to herself his love will flame anew, because it is impossible that her love cannot reanimate his. A woman, in the same way as a man, is slow to admit that the other's love is waning, provided hers be still alight. She believes that her caresses can re-quicken it, as a man believes that if he can only get the chance to explain everything, the fire of his words will conjure back what once was there. But young love which, in the phrase of Flecker, wakes on a white shoulder some-

times finds the shoulder unresponsive, however captivating be the whiteness.

Any man who has been in love can appreciate in vague terms, though not in particular, the sentiments of a woman in love. That sense of peace in unrest and of harmony amid upheaval is common to both sexes, but whereas love speaks of action to a man, to a woman it bears always an aspect of dowered expectancy. A girl in love, and absent from her lover, retires into a reverie which, in its glowing silence, tells her story more clearly than if she had shouted it from the housetop. Into the plainest of faces there comes a touch of beauty, and even the most angular woman develops a kind of soft abstraction.

And if ugliness takes on this tinge of beauty, and beauty itself flowers more lustrously, so for a girl in love the external world gleams with a fairness unperceived before. It is as if everything had been transmuted, and the very people she may have disliked at other times—the dull or tiresome people who have cramped her gaiety—appear suddenly touching in their solitude and unhappiness. For though her love is centred upon one alone, it throws out a circle of reflection which includes everybody (save perhaps any other young men that chance to be in love with her, who, if they persist in their declarations or even look too downcast, will be met with a new hardness verging on irritability), and the song she hears in her heart seems to echo in the surrounding air. Before her may lie disillusionment and desolation, but in these primal days she is released from doubt and care.

Happiness, indeed, flows from her like an invisible emanation, bringing its response even from those withered into forgetfulness of youth, and there is something exquisite about her gentleness and serenity. Her voice, heard, let us say, over the telephone to her lover, has a note of tenderness which can affect the most casual of listeners with a nostalgic pang of envy. And yet all those who feel the wave of her happiness, feel also a wish to shelter her from pain. Happiness is so fragile and its glory tarnishes so inevitably. Life with its treacherous quicksands is just ahead of her, and those quicksands have swallowed up too many of their own hopes and dreams.

Madame de Staël, who had had a stormy career, wrote in *De l'Influence des Passions*: "Love is the history of a woman's life; it is an episode in man's," and in one interpretation of the sentence, at any rate, this is profoundly true. For when love, with its fierce sweetness, enters the citadel of a woman, it never, at its height, shows itself as an episode, but is always the awaited signal that is to give direction to her existence. She may have loved before and she may love again, but the past is as nothing and the future is as the present. Only now, at last, is she living, and it is with an amazed self-pity she glances back on the woman she recently was.

Of course, love, with all its implications, is inherently more serious for a woman than for a man and her nervous mechanism responds to it more drastically. Moreover, as women do not fall in love with beauty, as men do, and are less liable than men to exalt the characters of their beloved, they are, as a rule, less lightly turned aside by that type of revelation which to a man may be as serious as to a woman it is trifling. I do not say that women are more faithful than men, but I do say that they are better armed against shocks.

It is easy for an onlooker to be contemptuous about love, and equally easy to be romantic. On the one hand, it is true that love is a question of propinquity and therefore an almost automatic emotion among young people; but, on the other hand, it is true that once a couple have fallen in love, each discovers in the other the one person in the world who matters. And while the love lasts, this is the only, the ultimate truth. Thus chance creates the absolute, and thus the most overwhelming of emotions may be aroused by somebody of whose very existence one was unaware a few weeks previously. This is as true of women as of men. They fall in love with an ecstatic certainty which brushes aside all objections and constructs out of illogicality an irresistible logic. There is no arguing with a woman in love, for hers is that "wisdom of the heart" which transcends experience.

Her unselfishness symbolizes her feeling of victory in submission. To give without reservation, to yield with joy, is an essential to her bliss, and to share disaster as confidently as happiness, to face with proud resolution some blow of fate or heavy dis-

appointment, is only further evidence of her total acceptance of new responsibilities. She hungers to prove to her dear one that she is his alone, and yet this meekness, this delight in the shaping of her mind to his and in doing what he wants her to do, is allied to a possessive instinct that is mastering him even while she is being mastered.

Love, which is itself a disguise of Nature, is never simple, although it appears to simplify everything. A woman may not know why she falls in love with one particular man, but behind her conscious thoughts there is a surge of unconscious thoughts. Bowing low before him in humility, as a lovely Circassian slave bows low before the master whom she leads as by a silken thread, she thrills to the knowledge that he, in his turn, is bowing low before her. Let her be the one who bestows, but let him, by reason of his love, be worthy of her gifts.

Love, no more than the smell of a flower, can be depicted in language, and all literary attempts to do so, be they never so impressive, are meaningless in a lover's ears. Yet the most unstudied words, repeated with artless reiteration, can sound as golden music to those for whom they are intended. In her dreams, encompassing her lover night and day, a girl sees but one face, and sometimes she is almost happiest when she is alone, recreating it in its every line and feature and typical little changes of expression. Her spirit is no longer in the shadowy room: a trance-like hush has calmed her heart and a smile hovers on her veiled eyes and parted lips. This, for a girl, is perhaps the most wonderful, certainly it is the most perfect, moment of love.

And yet, ardently as women grasp their happiness, it is nothing if not practical. In the need to look up to the men they care for—and in some esoteric manner they seem able, in love, to admire men whom ordinarily they would despise—they long to inspire them to success, and in their resolve to amalgamate their lives with theirs they want to share in everything. If love makes a woman visionary and beckons to an enchanted future, it also brings her down to earth, and every woman who is passionately devoted to a man is anxious to be useful as well as ornamental. She will dress as she knows her lover would like her to dress, but she is equally

ready to study dry text-books if she feels that by so doing she can be a fitter helpmeet. At the back of her head there may be determination to interest him eventually in her interests, but in the first flush of love it is his interests which absorb her. The abnegation of her being is instinctively attuned to his masculinity and her flattery is effective because it is sincere.

A woman in love dares anything and, when called upon, exults in denying the very code on which she has founded all her previous conduct. Love, for her, is a complete break with the past, and the fact that she has to change her name and go to a new home is merely an outward sign of the inward revolution. To a man marriage is an enlargement of his former life; to a woman it is the start of a fresh life. She is not content only to alter her status; she must alter her whole relationship to things and, in her progress from maid to matron, assume a definite, as against a tentative, attitude.

It is not surprising, therefore, that marriage has a significance for women which is not comparable to anything men experience. And this, maybe, is one of the reasons why, when a woman is finally persuaded that all her confidence has been misplaced, the revulsion of her feelings is apt to be so violent. Slow at the beginning to concede that love has really come to her, and then, when convinced that it has come, eager to yield everything—herself, her possessions, her energies—to the man who has evoked it, she is equally slow to accept defeat, but, when at last she does accept it, swift to trample on her hopes and to fill her soul with scorn and animosity.

There are moments in many a woman's life when love and loathing struggle for mastery within her, and when, though she be deliberately (and sometimes unnecessarily) cutting a man out of her life, she is torn to pieces in the act of so doing. She has fought for him, as Orpheus strove to save Eurydice from the pit; but if, to her fevered fancy, the hopelessness of the fight is at last made manifest, the reaction is terrible. She may still love in a racked sort of way, but hate is round the corner, and round the corner from hate is blankness. Her emotional nature, wrought to its topmost pitch, twists desperately upon itself and collapses like a pricked balloon.

About the most fatal thing a man can do is to act in such a manner, however gracefully he may carry it off, as to make a woman perceive that her femininity is lost upon him. By behaving thus he strikes at the very centre of her being and insults the one unique gift she has to offer him. Women grow cold as men do, and are false on occasion as men are, but they cannot bear to be exposed to what, in another frame of mind, they would be ready to expose men. Of course, it is also true that men are capable of intense bitterness, but they do not compromise themselves so uncontrollably or lay themselves open to misery with such abandon. They can feel as deeply as women, but they are seldom left quite so defenceless.

Women fall in love with "wasters" just as promptly—perhaps more promptly—as with honourable men, and it is notorious that even the most upright of women are liable to prefer men of experience to cloistered puritans. To be singled out by such a man appears to be a compliment to their personality, even when it is no more than a recognition of their sex. But unfortunately the woman on whom the philanderer attempts to exercise his powers of fascination is stimulating to him only in proportion as she is genuine. He wants to have his vanity tickled, but when that takes place the game is over for him, while for the girl, to whom matrimony looms as a mixture of heaven and haven, it is just beginning. A woman will often assure her lover—who, of course, may not be a philanderer at all—that she does not ask for marriage, but if marriage be feasible she scarcely ever means it. The man who accepts such words at their face value is inevitably laying up trouble for himself. Where marriage is concerned women seldom believe in the genuineness of excuses, and sooner or later their fretted thoughts, which were expressed as they were only to put him temporarily at his ease while his mind accustomed itself to the idea of the plunge, read evil into what may be but an unhappy diffidence awaiting, in hope, its opportunity. But if one day she gets level with him, she may be so shattered by the experience that she will refuse throughout her life the very thing which calls to her.

However, it is better to dwell on love triumphant than on love

defeated and confused. At its zenith it may, for either man or woman, hold the seeds of death in it already ; but who, in these luminous hours, cares a fig for such a contradiction ? If love's dominion be brief, everything else by comparison is the merest anodyne.

CHAPTER III

THE MYSTERY OF INFATUATION

IT is impossible to define in language the exact significance of certain words in relation to one another. Just as one might argue interminably as to where talent ended and genius began without reaching any satisfactory conclusion, in a similar style one might discuss the difference between infatuation and love. But as one is clear in one's mind when it comes to giving examples of genius and talent, so from observation or experience it is perfectly obvious that love and infatuation are not the same.

But perhaps we have been misled by the poets—sometimes in their lives as well as in their poetry—who never seem to distinguish one from the other, although they are our models for the expression of tender sentiments. Marlowe's rhetorical lines about love at first sight being the only real love are seldom true of love, but frequently true of infatuation; one of Shelley's most ravishing poems was inspired by his brief infatuation for Emilia Viviani; and Browning's couplet from *The Statue and the Bust* :—

The glory dropped from their youth and love,
And both perceived they had dreamed a dream,

though quite typical of the way in which infatuations end suddenly and mutually, is not typical of the ragged close of love.

For infatuation, having a false basis, is liable to vanish overnight, leaving nothing behind it in either heart save an exhausted repulsion and perplexity, while the death of love is nearly always tragic for at least one of the lovers. Great rivers do not flow unimpeded to the sea; they break up into slimy, twisting creeks, and their grandeur is lost in sordid mud-flats. And so is it with unhappy love: it terminates not with splendid gestures of renunciation, but with sorrow and bitterness and vain regret.

Yet at the beginning infatuation has a dash and excitement

which differ from the usual onset of love, that so often starts in uncertainty and, indeed, a sort of fear. The infatuated are really under a spell which, though it may appear timeless, has a very meagre time-limit. It invariably follows the same course: a mutual thrill, a mutual exaggeration, a mutual doubt, a mutual awakening. It is like comparing the week before Christmas with the week after Christmas.

The curious thing is that most people are just as capable of becoming infatuated as of falling in love, and that at its commencement the infatuation, being such a clarion call, may appear more genuine than the love—so markedly more so, in fact, that some might maintain that infatuation could turn into the finest kind of love did not the infatuated rush each other off their feet. But this, I am sure, is to mistake its whole significance. It is a bold, keen blossoming which inevitably decays; while love, with its diffidence and humility, grows and grows.

Love has been dissected a thousand times, but writers fight shy of infatuation—there are exceptions, of course—as if it were something to be ashamed of. But though in perspective an infatuation is rather ridiculous, like making a fool of oneself in public, it is a normal and common phase of sex attraction, and worth investigating. Nature, I need hardly say, has her system of trial and error by which one can be guided to a relatively suitable partner, and everybody has experienced those slight attractions which fade into nothing. But there is no sense of trial and error about infatuation. It is, to use another metaphor, a giant wind sweeping one off one's balance and shouting in one's ear that doubt is over and done with and that now, at last, the unbelievable has happened.

Perhaps its origin may be traced in certain instances to that dream-world in which part of our waking hours is spent. Many people, and not merely young people, are in love with love or, at any rate, ready, without their knowing it, to be kindled; and an infatuation, in which everything has to be explained and discovered at once, may be the result of an emotional starvation. But just as the wonderful visitors of our actual dreams, who seem the very answer to our secret hopes and ideals, pass out of our

memories in a few hours, so does the object of an infatuation sink quickly into the realm of never-was.

And yet young people, to whom life is holding out its arms and who are not starved in the least, are liable to become infatuated in a flash and to undergo the same rapid cycle of rise and fall. Perhaps, then, infatuation may be due to a super-charge of emotional energy, as if Nature, in her haste, were hurrying untried troops on to the field. And just as a mirage may have a semblance of heightened reality and drugs yield one a feeling of richer pulsation, so to the infatuated the will is unconquerable and obstacles exist only to be overcome. The rocket shoots skyward with a whirl, reaches its apex in a shower of blazing stars, and drops in dark oblivion to the ground.

Or perhaps infatuation is caused primarily by a sort of magnified tendency to romance, an eagerness to taste what others are tasting, a longing to give what others are giving. Such dispositions strike sparks from one another, and the sex impetus which lies behind all these manifestations screens itself in a rosy cloud and fools the two victims to the top of its bent. After all, many illnesses are simulated in Nature, so why should not love, which is a fever, be simulated by infatuation?

One of the odd things about infatuation is that in typically extreme cases—and all typical cases are extreme—the effects on men and women appear to be precisely the same, even to the details. For both it is practically simultaneous in its arrival and its departure; for both the degrees of response run parallel during and after. I do not mean by this that they lose the mental differences of their sexes, but that they are both suffering from an identical complaint, the symptoms of which can be accurately foretold and followed. Infatuation, in its larger significance, suggests a lack of judgment bordering on insanity; and possibly, in its tempestuous range, sex is a species of madness. As bees swarm through some obscure and often fatal instinct, as lemmings migrate only to meet with disaster, so perhaps there is in human beings a half-atrophied urge to act in a manner that will probably harm them.

This may be a totally unjustified hypothesis, but I am searching

for an explanation to fit the facts. I shall be told, of course, that I am on the wrong scent altogether, and that infatuation is no other than calf love or passion run riot; but though love *can*, on rare occasions, start with a flourish, I have seen the workings of infatuation too distinctly not to be convinced that it has properties peculiar to itself and that none of the usual explanations is suitable. It is not love grown cold, for love does not enter into it—how ludicrously false from shallow lips can sound the words “I love you!”—it is not satiated desire, for it is seldom satisfied.

But all the suggestions I have made are, I am well aware, rather fanciful, and I suppose one had better fall back on the truism that sex has endless ways of trying to fulfil its destiny. It is the consuming swiftness which appears so unaccountable. But peradventure, in reality, no more unaccountable than that enduring love which, year by year, can read into someone qualities nobody else is able to perceive. Everything about sex, save its animal instinct, is riddled with illogical enigmas.

Infatuations, being nearly always mutual in their every move—presumably because they would never get up steam without an immediate accord—do not leave lasting scars. Nevertheless all disillusionment is sad, and if there be pain in the surrender of hope, there is dreariness in the acknowledgment that hope itself was a myth. However, as most happily married couples have had their bouts of infatuation, one need not take such experiences too seriously. Indeed, infatuation may serve as a tonic, stirring its experimenters to further and securer efforts.

I have said above, and in fact I have made it clear throughout this chapter, that infatuations are “nearly always mutual”—on such a subject a discussion about women is equally and inevitably a discussion about men—but there are exceptions, and sometimes the emotionalism is entirely one-sided. The man or woman who confides to an embarrassed companion after a few days’ acquaintanceship, “I have been waiting for you all my life” (a typical example), is not only quite likely to have forgotten the phrase, gleaned more probably than not from some novel recently read, in another few days, but to have forgotten the person to whom it

was addressed. Or, rather, forgotten her or him save as a disagreeable sort of interlude. Humiliating for all concerned.

And of course it happens now and then that infatuation is induced by the pleased conceit which steals over the heart at the admission to oneself of being *really* loved. Such cases cannot but hold misery for one of the parties, but the infatuation is so brief and the disclosure so ruthless that the remedy is seldom long delayed. Perhaps women, in this respect, are more often deceived than men, and it is no wonder they distrust that self-complacent vanity which slumbers in so many males. Undoubtedly women also are affected by flattery, many of them, but not being blind to themselves, as men are, they cannot induce, though they can often assume, a fraudulent, if fleeting, response to disguise their real purpose.

Naturally the word "infatuation," having a contemptible significance, is habitually misapplied, and when a father informs his daughter that she is infatuated because she wants to marry a penniless youth, it is not philological accuracy at which he is aiming, but the stinging phrase to shame her into acquiescence with his wishes. But if she switches over to a millionaire (what a word out of the past, these days!), however elderly and disreputable—some fathers *are* like that in real life as well as in melodramas—it is probable that she will be hailed as "daddy's sensible girl." And if one thinks that universal poverty is going to alter all this, one must remember that snobbishness in its various disguises is everlasting.

And how readily the unsuccessful suitor rushes to "infatuated" to describe his *inamorata's* state of mind when she chooses some one else. Many a youth persuades himself that the girl who rejects him *is* in love with him if only she understood herself, and many a girl believes that the man she wants could not but come to her if his eyes were opened. In fact, "infatuated" is a handy word for masking injured pride.

Its constant misuse has had the rather amusing effect of convincing numerous people that it has only been invented by outraged elders to depict the caprices of their children. And so, far from being shocked at the news that some girl of their ac-

quaintance is "infatuated" by some lad, the average family friends are more likely to be sympathetic to the girl than appalled at her behaviour, and to hold that, though the marriage may be unsuitable from a worldly angle, she is deeply and heroically in love. The masterful temper of certain parents is only too apt to defeat itself.

Hasty marriages do sometimes result from infatuations, but they have to be very hasty unless opposition brings on the scene another set of factors, and so creates resistance. People dislike being called infatuated as much as they dislike being called humourless, and they will run counter to the best advice, even if it coincides with their own private feelings, if delivered tactlessly. That is where parents in their anxiety so often make a mess of things. They can be as ignorant about their children as a hen is about the ducklings she has hatched.

Needless to emphasize, marriages of this sort are the most fantastic of farces and go to pieces with the celerity and completeness of a snow-man. They leave no trace whatever, and in every country there are plenty of people who have been, or yet are, married, but who literally could not delineate the physical outlines of their legal spouses. It is not merely forgetfulness infatuation leaves behind; it is a strangely total negation. So it is not surprising that Bernard Shaw, with his reformer's ardour, furiously attacks the folly of the inviolability of such marriages in his Preface to *Getting Married*: "When two people are under the influence of the most violent, most insane, most delusive, and most transient of passions, they are required to swear that they will remain in that excited, abnormal, and exhausting condition until death do them part."

Now I have little doubt that Shaw included love, passion, and infatuation in the one sentence, for that is how his mind seems to work, but to me, personally, it is an admirable picture of infatuation alone in all its absurdity. While no one believes that love is immortal, it is not as fleeting as an April shower and it may lead, and often does lead, to an emotion which nothing can replace.

Although, as I have suggested, there are few things people resent more than a charge of infatuation, they are not averse to

alluding to it obliquely later as a means of self-justification. When a girl, say, is no longer under the spell, the theory she concocts is that the youth had some sort of occult power over her. At least, that is one of the theories. Another is that it was only when she got to know him that she found him out—and the odd thing is that she was never within thousands of miles of knowing him ! No nice girl is ever infatuated ; she makes a mistake she could scarcely have helped making. A shattered romance has its dignity—to break loose from an entanglement shows courage—but you must not yourself grow tired too soon or admit to any basic defect of character. This appears to be the convention, if indeed conventions of such an order exist nowadays. Perhaps everything is now explained away by reference to chemical reactions or ductless glands.

Perhaps. Yet even so it must still be possible to feel rather small when your vision turns out to be a soap bubble and your marvellous revelation a mare's nest. But that is what does happen in cases of infatuation. Jointly and severally the infatuated ones open their eyes and, behold, the other has disappeared. In the wide compass of our senses there is nothing to compare with it.

It is conceivable that in the world of feeling some people are only capable of infatuation, and that as they near the goal their ecstasy inevitably evaporates. This may be caused by mis-used opportunities or nervous inconstancy, but perhaps most of all it is caused by that sense of eternal incompleteness which is the curse lying in wait for those whose temperaments require a subtlety of understanding almost beyond what is possible. The web *can* be unravelled and the reserves of the inner nature released, but few there are to accomplish the task. Then again, for the sentimentalist (a bad type) everything is meaningless as soon as gained, because it is only beyond the horizon that beauty dwells.

And yet, profoundly unsatisfactory as infatuation be, it has its moments of rapture ; and considering how few such moments are, even in the fullest life, one must not entirely despise what is in theory despicable. A misleading message, soon to be refuted,

can exhilarate one temporarily, and as most of our days slip uneventfully and cheerlessly into the past we may as well accept our pointless infatuations with a certain amount of gratitude.

The longer one lives, the clearer one perceives that arguments seldom change opinions and that they appeal mainly to those whose intelligence and personality are on the same plane as the arguer's. Therefore one should be neither elated nor dismayed by approval or disapproval, even if, as frequently happens, the whole response depends on the mood or the company. I feel that all this is particularly true about a subject like infatuation, where anything can be said and anything defended or refuted. I myself believe it has its place, not originally, perhaps, but through the incomprehensible vagaries of civilization, in the broad scheme of sex relations; but I admit that my opinion is tentative in a purely personal meaning. The best one can do is to state one's conclusions as succinctly as one can and leave the rest to chance.

I fear that these jottings are rather vague, not to say amorphous. But, as I declared at the beginning, the difference between infatuation and love is elusive in words, though plain enough in examples, and particularly, I would add, in the examples of one's own experience. I can only hope, therefore, that one of these days somebody else will prove more successful than I have been in expounding this neglected phase of sex activity.

CHAPTER IV

WOMEN AND MARRIAGE

MARRIAGE is both a very simple thing and a very complex thing. It is simple because, when most people marry, Nature throws over the proceeding an air of inevitability; it is complex because it means that two personalities, inherently obscure to each other, undertake to live harmoniously together for the rest of their days. And considering that there are probably as many antagonisms as attractions between men and women, it is really surprising how many marriages turn out happy or, at any rate, tolerable.

At least, it seems surprising, but this is perhaps due to the fact that because the law says we must be monogamous and because many monogamous marriages fail, we are rather inclined to argue that monogamy—I am discussing feelings as well as legalities—has been imposed upon us by civilization, while polygamy is, anyhow with men, a more natural instinct. But just as our actions are governed both by free will and determinism, maybe mankind is both polygamous and monogamous. In other words, maybe the pull in one direction is balanced by a pull in the other, and if marriage over-emphasizes our monogamous leanings, nevertheless these leanings are as native to us as those of the opposite order.

Without going into all the reasons, from self-restraint to self-interest, that keep marriages alive which would otherwise wither, and without making obvious remarks about ardent love melting into affectionate companionship, I would like to put forward the suggestion that as marriage, in some of its most vital aspects, means more to women than to men, it is to women in the main that it owes its solid foundation.

Marriage has been called a career for women, but it is also an emancipation. Not only is it a question of earning board and allowance, but of gaining freedom and position. Nineteen women

out of twenty would rather be married, even though their marriages are humdrum or positively uncongenial, than remain single. For marriage is a condition which, though practically universal, is felt by every woman to be a unique achievement. Very queer ! Women are quite well aware that while many married men envy their bachelor friends, nearly all married women pity their spinster friends. The wedding ring is not merely a symbol of lawful marriage, it is a symbol of that magic circle from which spinsters are excluded. Indeed, marriage for a woman is more than board and allowance, more than freedom and position ; it is fulfilment.

Moreover, women want to be anchored because they want to be safe. Unlike most men, they have an instinctive hunger for children, and only in marriage can the safety of themselves and their children be even relatively assured. Furthermore, a marriage without children has not the same prestige as a marriage with children. To be justified completely, both in her inner and her outer life, a woman must be a wife *and* a mother, and she relies on children to keep the marriage solvent in the dangerous midway years. She builds for the future, and though she may enter upon marriage as recklessly as a man, she is liable to maintain a firmer grip on reality.

And so women are heartily in favour of marriage as a rock-bound institution, while men favour it rather as a necessary custom and as a means of stifling jealousy. Self-protection, from its every angle, urges women to get married, but men are more carried away by the fervour of the moment. I agree that happy marriage for a man is worth, and richly worth, all the surrenders he has to make ; but whereas a woman gains visibly from the word go, deriving also, let us hope, the satisfaction a man derives, he loses at once in pocket, in liberty, and in social acceptability. Was it this reflection which caused Disraeli's character in *Lothair* to observe? : " Every woman should marry—and no man."

In writing of marriage one must be prepared to admit that to this, as to any generalization, there are endless exceptions. Yet, endless as these exceptions are, they do really prove the rule that about marriage women are deeply conservative. Despite the fact that

divorce is constantly being made easier and that women, seduced by the laxity of the age, pay lip-service to these innovations, I fancy that the ordinary woman, whose name never appears in public and who is unknown outside a small coterie—the woman, in brief, who, in her millions, composes the vast mass of womanhood—holds to the inviolability of marriage as strongly as ever she did. She fears her own promiscuous thoughts; she hates the promiscuous thoughts of men.

But the theory that women are naturally more monogamous than men is little better than a Victorian myth. Women hanker after change in much the same manner as do men, but in monogamy they find their safeguard, and so they keep the myth alive in order to shame the wandering glances of their husbands. A woman can make a man overwhelmingly apprised of his wedded state without a word being uttered, and her rectitude shines all the clearer because of her vanquished temptations. I am not pretending that many women do not lead double lives—probably more do than is ever suspected—I am only saying that far more women than men resist their impulses. Love may murmur agonizingly in their ears, but the majority are not going to leave the harbour of respectability for the perilous ocean of romance.

Even those women who deceive their husbands still believe that their marriage is more significant than their amours. The calm skill they exhibit in avoiding detection, and their easy conscience in regard to any lapse, show how little they allow a temporary emotion to impinge upon a settled reality. Women, as a rule, experience few, if any, pangs over moral backslidings, and they can feel wholly married to a man to whom they are frequently unfaithful. For what is valuable to them about marriage is its permanent relationship, and this is not affected in the least by brief and undiscovered escapades.

In the same way, a sensible woman does not allow herself to be too distraught by her husband's infidelities. She would much rather they did not occur and she does not want to hear about them, but so long as they are not flagrant, so long as they do not undermine the normal equanimity of the home, she would usually prefer to bear with them than run to the divorce court.

It is not the roué she fears, it is the idealist. The roué sips here and there only to return, the idealist may go off for ever. The Shelleys of the world cause deeper if, in the aggregate, less havoc than the Byrons.

Though women permit themselves all sorts of foibles and are made up of all kinds of contradictions, where marriage is concerned they are adamant. They regard it as civilization's first move towards equality of the sexes, and though they would agree that equality in divorce is another step forward, I am not sure that, speaking generally, they do not consider divorce itself as one of men's dubious expedients. Such a statement would, of course, be vehemently denied by innumerable women, but these, I venture to think, are the vocal ones. What about the myriads of voiceless women whose one and only triumph has been to secure a husband? You seldom see that type in a divorce.

I know it is often said that if women had the same financial independence as men, many women who now marry would not marry. But I am not impressed. No doubt numerous women, for financial reasons, do marry men to whom they are not particularly attracted, but that does not imply that if their circumstances were different they would remain single. All it implies is that they would have more liberty to choose. Marriage is in women's blood—as Anatole France observed to Brusson (*Anatole France Abroad*): “Marriage is a mania with women. They all have it”—and even those many-times-married and much-publicized ladies who flit across the front-page from time to time do not allow their penchant for fresh husbands to influence their respect for matrimony. On the contrary. It is marriage alone which carries the final seal of social approval.

The fact is that, though the legal ties of marriage are constantly being loosened, women never stop consolidating their position as wives and possible wives. And as most of this work goes on, so to speak, underground, men have only an uneasy idea that some sort of vague and universal conspiracy is afoot. But despite the tireless ingenuity of women, they sometimes under-estimate the restiveness of men and spoil their plans by seeking to encircle them too successfully. The veiled threats—and not always so

very veiled—that women employ to bring men up to the scratch are apt to discourage rather than intimidate, apt to make men think twice rather than clinch the matter without further thought. It often happens, in fact, that women's calculations are so ruthless that they prove detrimental to themselves.

But in resenting women's manœuvres, men simply do not appreciate the equivocal standing of women who are not married. A middle-aged bachelor is regarded as being shrewd; a middle-aged spinster as unfortunate. One may dispute this as being merely a conventional assumption, yet actually it gets near the truth. But of course it is all ridiculous; not only can any girl, if moderately attractive and intelligent, generally make her selected man propose, but many old maids have had plenty of opportunities. Moreover, there are devoted women in all walks of life who, for one reason or another, have avoided marriage. But the theory persists, and women themselves, once they are married, are not going to belittle their victory by refuting it. Thus many a girl who has no natural aptitude for marriage, and no particular wish for it, does get married after all.

The words "aptitude" and "wish" suggest a whole range of thoughts about marriage. Some women, as some men, seem to be born married and one cannot imagine them single. They know instinctively how to make a success of marriage, and even should success elude them they are quite prepared to go on experimenting. Other women, again, have secluded temperaments, and marriage only throws them in upon themselves. There are clinging women, there are independent women, there are women whose conduct varies from day to day, if not from hour to hour. The disposition for marriage is as diverse in women as in men.

As for the physical aspect of marriage, that is an even more difficult subject. Whole libraries have been written about it, but I think the principal thing to emphasize here is that, apart from exceptional cases, physical passion in a woman is more dormant than in a man. It is there, waiting to be roused, in nearly all women, but it does not follow that the man a woman loves knows how to rouse it. That is the tragedy of many marriages; that is the rift of discontent which can finally ruin the most selfless

devotion. The mind and the body must be mutually attuned ; but how often does it happen that through ignorance or disharmony something goes wrong, something which perhaps can never be remedied. It can indeed be said that both in the physical and the emotional spheres the early days of marriage may set the tone which makes or mars it. This is the time when tact, founded upon affection, is put to its supreme test.

Sex is obviously too dynamic a thing for dogmatism, but as its manifestations are profoundly bound up with personality, it is evident that the imaginative side of it is just as important as the physical. When sex desire is the principal cause of marriage, as it so often is under various disguises, the marriage is likely to end in disaster ; but when sex is sublimated in love, disaster may also be the outcome. In fact, apart from any other reasons, the marriage of two people who have not lived together before can only be a gamble : an absolutely vital factor has been omitted from the calculation. But that experiment may lead to its own special disasters. So where are we ?

And yet it is surprising how many marriages do seem to prosper. A sense of mutual helpfulness and mutual compassion can solve or lighten the most intricate problems, and though perhaps fewer marriages are as ideally happy as the fulsome biographies of celebrities and the pious preambles to rich men's wills might lead us to suppose, yet many marriages, once trembling in the balance, have acquired a permanent basis through a courageous and tolerant facing of difficulties. So long as people do not get on each other's nerves nothing is hopeless, and if it is only the optimist who expects lasting bliss, it is only the pessimist who gives up without a struggle. To be sound on the subject of marriage one has to appear trite.

Of course, numbers of women, who may or may not be religious, regard marriage as a sacrament, whose vows cannot be broken without dishonour. I have small doubt that such an attitude sometimes results in an intense internal struggle and may lead to a kind of mental aridity ; but, conversely, I expect that most of the women who hold such views are better able to suppress their wayward tendencies than are their sisters. They have taken their

line once for all and, for the most part, they do not let themselves listen to the voice of the tempter. But unfortunately self-dedication of this brand does not invariably spell happiness for the other partner, and nothing is more sadly futile than a dead marriage ending in a legal separation short of divorce.

To men, who, on the surface, give up so much to be married, marriage is one of life's adventures; but to women, who, on the surface, gain so much by marriage, it is one of life's afflictions. This may sound a paradoxical remark, but I believe it to be essentially true. For women do not accept life as light-heartedly as do men, and they have a driving sense of duty which makes them glory in upsetting cherished habits and in devising new worries. This peculiar, though sincere, interpretation of duty often gives their families acute discomfort, and husbands especially come to dread that wifely expression which portends an attack of domestic morality.

But though women, as I suggest, regard marriage as a sort of martyrdom, they are great match-makers and think it the only thing for a girl. This, I consider, is another proof of the enormous importance, outside pleasure altogether, which women attach to matrimony. The rather infantile joke that they want to see their women friends married in order that they, too, can learn what worry is comes from the trifling manner in which they frequently discuss marriage. Naturally, if they are being contemptuous merely as a gesture, this may be reckoned as a rejoinder to men's disillusioned utterances and of no particular significance. All the same, there is something, not only very obnoxious (though far from unusual) about the women who go into details with other women on the subject of their marital relations, but basically very untrue to women's own doctrine of marriage. Certainly, personal rancour or personal pettiness can co-exist with a philosophic conception, but it is a sign of inferiority and creates an unpleasant impression.

For just because marriage *is* so important to women, they have, if I read them correctly, a more mystical view of it than men. One meets women, though one never meets men, who, even if a divorce has broken their marriage, still think of it as indestructible

—and this not necessarily from a theological, but from an instinctive, attitude. And discourage them as one may, there is this to be said for their position: all sorts of marriages survive far more tenaciously than anybody would have held to be possible, and it is obvious that in marriage, or perhaps in human nature, there is much that the cynical analyst never allows for and much about which men such as Patmore and Chesterton, theologically biased though they were, were absolutely right.

Women let marriage grow upon them with the years more than do men. However loyal a husband is, and however long he has been married, he retains a boyish appetite for the outside world and wants to have his innocent fling. But a woman tends to devote herself more and more completely to her family as time goes on, and once she is past her youth and, above all, that dangerous age when youth is on the wing, to be wholly absorbed in her husband and her children. Probably this is her intuitive answer to Nature, which, with its usual scurvy treatment of her sex, makes her active years both perturbed and brief; but as it is exhibited in mental characteristics, it is not always easy for even the most devoted husband to keep pace with it.

Every marriage, indeed, goes through difficult phases inherent in monogamy. But, then, it fashions so many ties, so many mutual secrets, so many confessions all the more sacred in that they are vulnerable, that one perceives how, notwithstanding the polygamous craving for change, the sense of ecstasy which the flicker of an eyelid or a backward glance whispering "Come and find me!" can bring, it is to most people the one lasting satisfaction.

And this perhaps is all one need really say about a theme on which one could talk for ever.

CHAPTER V

MAN IN A WOMAN'S LIFE

WOMEN'S deepest satisfactions are almost invariably bound up with their most persistent trials. There is a tendency to masochism in their outlook, a reflection perhaps of the physical foundation of their being, and consequently the happiness they draw from men is tinged by all sorts of emotions which in themselves are anything but happy.

It has been said that it is a comfortable feeling for a woman to have a man about the house, but if it were not also an infernal nuisance I suspect there would be fewer men about houses than there are. For women, whose aim it is to achieve a sense of moral gratification from their various acts, would not, on the whole, be so drawn to the conjugal state if they were not able to convince themselves that it is only because it is so charged with obligations that they are entitled to the enjoyment of its amenities.

There are, of course, many individual women who are quite amoral in their approach to life, but even such women invent crosses for themselves and would be, in most cases, very offended if one were to suggest they were hedonists. For it is in the blood of women to feel that existence is a burden, and, save in the first flush of youth, nearly all of them have to complicate their cheerfulness by the mental addition of a task. In short, women have to justify themselves before they can taste that sort of permanent felicity which comes from a fulfilled career, and even then it must be felicity with a twinge in it.

I think one should appreciate all this if one is really to understand the place men occupy in the lives of women. There are many reasons why a man is necessary to a woman, but unless one perceives that, first and foremost, he is a necessary trial, one may miss something in her outlook which colours the whole of her thoughts. Women nearly always believe that they give more

than they get, and this conviction of unselfishness puts them in such an advantageous position with themselves that they find it perfectly easy to justify their every act and perfectly natural to accept homage as their due.

A woman may love, admire, and respect her husband, she may feel that without him everything would be a blank and that his strength is her fortress, but such thoughts do not dull her assurance that he would be more lost without her than she would be without him. In other words, that she has brought more into the partnership than he has. He may be the breadwinner, but she is the mother—and many women derive a secret emotion of mingled pride and resentment from the fact that they play so infinitely more onerous a part than men in the production and upbringing of children.

Men fascinate and irritate women eternally, and the more they feel the need of them the more they fascinate and irritate them. Women enormously prize the sheer masculinity of men and yet, in a sense, they despise it. Why should such force be allied to such clumsiness, and why should men be so pleased with themselves when without women they would never get anything done at all? It is women who pull the strings, it is women who soothe them and encourage them, and yet there go the men prancing about as if they were the lords of creation!

But at the same time they *are* so essential! A woman without a man is like a watch without a mainspring, and, over and above other aspects of his usefulness, who else can protect her from the ravages of solitude and time? With a man beside her life takes on purpose and solidity; without a man it is increasingly meaningless and alarming. In a Press interview Judith Anderson, the actress, once said: "There is nothing enduring in life for a woman except what she builds in a man's heart," and most women, whether openly or not, would agree with this. It may not be their final ideal, but it is the one ideal that works. For woman wants an anchor, and man, with all his faults and frailties, is the only real anchor she has.

This may sometimes be a vexatious thought, but however rebellious a woman be, she returns to it at last with a kind of inner

resignation. For, after all, there is a harmony between the sexes which goes deeper than the disharmony. A man and a woman could spend a winter together in the Arctic night and grow only fonder, whereas two men or two women together in such surroundings would soon begin to hate one another, fall silent, and, when the ordeal was over, never want to meet again.

Provided marriage is not one of those hopeless misfits, a wife is never tired of studying what she probably considers the curious quirks and odd angles of her husband's character. She is always filling in the lines, as though he were a colossal, nay, an endless, crossword puzzle, and in many a marriage, which would otherwise sink into the doldrums of listless acceptance, she is saved from boredom by a sort of amused tenderness in contemplation of his individuality. She knows him and she does not know him; he is an open book to her, but he is also a book in a foreign language.

Women, even more than men, are prejudiced and partial, and in the result they are often drawn to that of which they disapprove. They age into love, as Meredith says, and even if their fastidious and elusive personalities mock at their men-folk, yet in that very mockery there is a link which creates and keeps affection. Their self-importance is flattered by what they observe, and their maternal instinct is aroused by the helplessness which they invariably read into men. To a wife long married a husband is at once touching and absurd, and, though she may trust him implicitly in all material things, she feels that there is a whole subtle side of life which is entirely her province.

When it is not simply a question of emotional love—that thing which starts in glory and ends so often in despair—a woman becomes more absorbed in a man the more she knows him. She is always finding out new things about him, or developing a thesis which she started on her honeymoon, and years after physical attraction has waned the marriage may be growing closer. As life goes on and her children marry, a woman is liable to replace them in her mind, to some extent, by her husband, for on him only can she now shower all her care. He is the one being who belongs to her alone, and as he gets old and infirm he gets, as it

were, younger, because more dependent, in her eyes. Bacon wrote in his essay, *Of Marriage and Single Life*, "Wives are young men's mistresses, companions for middle age, and old men's nurses," and Bacon, being an uncommonly wise man—though a vilely false friend, as witness his behaviour to Essex and Somerset—made in this remark a generalization that bears repetition. But though, according to the period of her life, a woman may be a mistress or a companion to her husband, she is never a nurse in the ordinary meaning of the word. Or rather, she is always more than a nurse. She may tend him in sickness and in health, she may guard him night and day, but what she is really doing is mothering him.

The maternal instinct in women, which begins when little girls play with dolls and continues to the edge of the grave, accounts, I think, for an inherent, universal feminine attitude towards men which is not altogether popular with them until they are in particular need of it. This attitude may be crystallized as the assumption of a higher wisdom, impervious alike to experience or to brains. As men, to a woman's view, never quite cease from being children, women never quite cease from treating them as such. In fact, though women like what they call "grown-up" men, they are seldom the type they want to marry. For they do not want, in this respect, to marry their equals; they want to marry their inferiors, who are more normal and more easily managed.

To revert to Bacon's aphorism, there is no doubt that large numbers of young wives do appreciate the position of being legal mistresses. It is not that they like the word "mistress"—they detest it—but that, thoroughly enjoying the marital relationship, it is their special pride to be able to abolish such a word from their husbands' thoughts. The old idea that a mistress was exciting and a wife insipid infuriates women, as well it may, and the modern girl, freed from the shackles of original sin, is fully resolved that no such stigma shall rest on her. This sounds very much of a truism, but it would have sounded indecent in, say, 1850. Women have drawn level with men; they have not lagged behind while preening themselves on forging far ahead.

And as for the companionship of middle age, that is perhaps the securest thing a woman gains from marriage. A spinster past her youth is seldom in much request, and affectionate companionship for a woman whose beauty and vivacity are on the wane is a thing which, speaking broadly, only marriage can secure. Compulsory solitude is one of the banes of a woman's life; but to share the company of a man who knows all the obvious points about her character and her tastes and has some insight even into the more abstruse ones, whose sense of humour and whose kindness, moreover, can accommodate themselves to her moods, is the best of all antidotes against the encroachments of age.

But, of course, behind all the reasons that can be detailed logically one after the other there is the greatest reason of all, which is the instinct of men and women to find comfort—a word of wide, varied, and mingled interpretation—in one another's proximity and society, a comfort which, however fraught with all sorts of things the reverse of comfortable, is nevertheless the basis of final satisfaction. A manless woman may convince herself that she has evaded trouble in a dozen directions, but she is dwelling on a heap of dry cinders instead of in the lush and sappy meadow of life. By retaining her liberty she has denied something in herself which takes all the meaning out of liberty.

Married women grumble a good deal, but by and large their grumbles are, as one might put it, within the orbit of their complacency at being married. In the very act of grumbling and of describing the shortcomings of their husbands they know that they do so only because they can afford to do so. The unmarried woman keeps her melancholy and her complaints to herself because she is a loser in the game; but the married woman can call loudly for sympathy because she is one of the winners. She need not be particularly happy in her marriage—she may, in fact, be thoroughly dissatisfied—but at any rate there is a certain completeness in her life which, in one facet of a woman's soul, transcends any question of happiness or unhappiness.

Naturally, one cannot make remarks of this sort without admitting, not alone the countless number of exceptions to any rule, but the vast number of reasons which may influence the reactions

of individual women towards individual men. This is a subject about as large as the number of women, and therefore it is useless to attempt anything save the vaguest statements. If some women regard life without a man as terrible because he is at once lover, protector, and child, others regard it as terrible because without a man they would be unable to whet their acid wit and exhibit their evident superiority.

Indeed, there is absolutely no saying how, in a given instance, women may be affected by men; the only thing one can say for sure is that the great majority are deeply affected for good or evil. For apart from anything else, women require an audience for the development of their personalities. And an audience of women, whose habit it is to discount each other's behaviour and remarks, is no help; it is an audience of men that is needed. A man can evoke the hidden vitality of a woman by his mere presence, and though he may often aggravate her beyond endurance, yet in the very process of doing so he is bringing zest into her life.

For women, as men, are terrified of boredom, and being more interested in personalities than in anything else, are able to make a study of their husbands a lifetime's entertainment. And in a lesser degree their approach to all men is one of diverting annoyance and pleasurable anticipation. "Here are these strange creatures, whom we cannot do without and who cannot do without us, but who *will* behave in a manner so totally absurd that they would soon drive us mad if *we* did not have a sense of the ludicrous and *they* did not have a touch of the infantile!" Such notions frequently pass through a woman's mind at the very moment she is exclaiming: "Dearest, how wonderful you are!"

Curiosity influences women's actions, where men are concerned, more than is ordinarily conceded, and many a preposterously rash and pointless sexual adventure is based on nothing stronger. Women, naturally, do not care to admit to this, for sex can only be dignified by romance or, at least, passion, but nevertheless it is so. It explains much that would otherwise be inexplicable and has to be seriously considered when debating the whole problem of the relations between men and women.

Though women instinctively distrust women, yet they discuss

their husbands' characters with one another to a far wider extent than the husbands would be at all glad to learn. And as these discussions are largely concerned with the failings of men and the troubles endured by women, a general feeling of martyrdom is engendered which is only very partially sincere. They are all, as it were, in a cabal to under-estimate the benefits of marriage, because it places them in a better position to stress its responsibilities and, indeed, its drawbacks. Women accept such confidences from women with many reservations, but it suits their book to agree that the lot of wives is unenviable and tribulation the main outcome of matrimony.

There are certain things women will not face squarely, and therefore it does not always follow that their definite statements bear much relation to their true thoughts. A woman may half-convince herself that men are little better than brutes, when in her inmost soul she is quite well aware that without them her life would be horribly flat. Her ideal of a man is one who could understand and forestall her every mood and whim, but in reality such a man would soon either weary or frighten her. For she revels in her patient coping with the ageless problem of male stupidity, and she would detest a man who mocked her with his glance. Women fear irony.

Mature women are often averse from showing any undue interest in the society of men, partly because they want to impress one another by their modesty—nearly all women lie to other women about their "dislike" of sex—and partly because they are terrified of making themselves cheap. They have definite theories as to men's conduct and point of view, and recognized methods of protecting themselves and making themselves desirable. They are on the defensive even when they are on the offensive, and that is one of the reasons why their sudden changes appear so unaccountable.

And yet, being only human, they frequently cannot conceal what they know they ought to conceal; and thus a man who is, let us say, being repulsed by a woman with a sort of feeble vehemence may discern that he is rapidly gaining ground with her. Women like to be courted, even if it be only in a trivial flirtation,

and that sometimes makes them overplay their part, either succumbing when they would rather not or assuming an exaggerated reciprocity which they do not feel. For while they are apprehensive of revealing affection too soon, they are also apprehensive of delaying the revelation until it is too late. All women are not equally adept at handling men, and many of them, in truth, are being very obvious when they think they are being very astute.

Woman's life, like that of a juggler, is the balancing of one thing as against another. She believes that her safety and her happiness depend to a considerable extent on understatement, and though she is quite prepared at the right instant to manifest enthusiasm or cause scenes, the right instant arrives only when she has secured, or flatters herself she has secured, a foothold.

Here again, of course, one has to allow for a multitude of exceptions, but this is the usual routine. The intuition of a woman warns her to be cautious, but her intuition also warns her to seize her opportunities. If she has the natural accomplishments which make for success, accomplishments which stupid women may have and which intelligent women may lack, it all comes easy to her and she reaches her goal. If, however, she is either too sceptical or too readily the slave of her emotions, she may make, with every advantage, an awful hash of her career. Is it singular that women regard the problem with misgivings and come to consider that men, so requisite to their welfare and the whole scheme of their existence, are also a perpetual menace?

To put it briefly, women need men just as much as men need women, but through temperament and policy they moralize about this need to themselves and try to conceal it from the world.

CHAPTER VI

WOMEN WITHOUT MEN

NEITHER men nor women were intended to live alone, but while solitary men seem able to arrange their lives so that they appear rounded, even when incomplete, solitary women, however busy they may be, seem to live in a manner which can only be called angular.

Perhaps it is partly that a woman's existence knows many more inhibitions than a man's and that she cannot, without provoking comment, be as free and easy in her social contacts or in her casual recreations. But this is only one small aspect of the matter. There is a native lack of conviviality in women, and their friendships for one another, genuine as they may be, are bounded by a kind of primness, a kind of watchfulness, which entirely preclude that hail-fellow-well-met feeling that brings out all the latent boyishness in a man.

Women no doubt would reply that this is a masculine reaction which, far from interesting them, is actually inane, and that they have their own satisfactions; but though I am quite prepared to admit the last, I cannot help wondering whether the happiness they find in the company of other women is anything like as great as the happiness men find in the company of other men. In different words, whether the average woman is capable of experiencing with her sex that sense of inner well-being which a man is quite capable of experiencing, from time to time, with *his* sex.

In a man's club there is an atmosphere of tranquil fellowship, and one feels that, so far as this particular place is concerned, all the members are friends; but in a woman's club there is an atmosphere of underlying suspicion, and one feels that each woman is using it only for her own convenience. Of course, as I have pointed out in my next chapter, women are instinctively jealous of one another; but even in the most favourable conditions,

where such an instinct could be subordinated without danger, women, however outwardly gracious to other women, mentally fight shy of them. The air of warmth in a man's club turns to an air of chilliness in a woman's club, and these two things are emphasized, with freakish relevance, in the quality of the food usually served by the two institutions: who ever had a good meal at a woman's club?

Men are thoroughly at home with one another, but a curious discomfort often pervades a meeting of women. It is as though they became genuine only in the presence of a man, and when they are chatting with other women even the tone of their voices and the scope of their gestures have something artificial about them. And not only artificial, but exaggerated, as if they were trying to conceal their mistrustful boredom by overdoing everything. Perhaps this explains why it is that when two women converse on the telephone they find it practically impossible to stop; long after the original reason for the call has been exhausted they are still talking nineteen to the dozen. Can it be that neither dare give the other an opportunity of saying she was cut off abruptly?

The ordinary bachelor does not become embittered as life goes on, but the ordinary spinster, allowing for the many exceptions, does show a trend in that direction. An anti-man complex frequently pervades her, and a touch of the shrew—an expansion, maybe, of that feminine shrillness some women practise and other women detest—often tints her thought and sharpens her tongue. I dare say there are physiological reasons for this, but the fact remains that the middle-aged spinster is apt to lack those very characteristics which give a peculiar charm to the middle-aged wife.

I am not implying that most embittered women do not conduct themselves decorously in public, but simply that they are touchy and cynical at one and the same instant and that you cannot be with them for half an hour without "placing" them. Their discontent with existence has an acrimonious tang about it which is not to be mistaken, and they seem to rejoice in those spurts of venom most people allow themselves only in moments of acute

personal exasperation. But, then, disharmony is a truly miserable emotion for all concerned.

It is obvious that a bachelor's life is seldom so frustrated, in any of its aspects, as is that of most spinsters; and if one takes this into consideration, surely spinsters are entitled to complain that they have not had a fair innings. But why do so many of them, in their disapproval of men, try to convince themselves, not alone that they are their equals in every direction, but that, apart from their sex, there is nothing to differentiate them? It reminds me of those vegetarian restaurants which, in order to hearten the doubters or excite the converts, persist in doing up their dishes to resemble lamb cutlets and other horrible products of flesh-eating barbarians. That early feminist, Elizabeth Hitchener, quite voices the view of innumerable women in her absurd line, quoted by Dowden in his *Life of Shelley*, but not, I think, to be found in her published work: "All, all are men—*women* and all!"

An unattached man, with certain reservations, leads very much the same sort of life as a husband of his own class, but an unattached woman tends more and more to draw in upon small cliques and to search for anodynes which would not attract, or at least master, the average married woman. She is always attempting to create a world of her own or to bridge a gap. In either case, contented as she may be in a negative sense, she is vaguely aware of being a misfit, and the ceaseless industry she often displays cannot altogether stifle her disquiet.

But perhaps this is too sweeping, for I would be the last to deny the power of interests to cheer a solitary woman's heart and, in their absorbing force, hide from her the awful vacuum of loneliness. In her religion, her good works, her garden, her music, her sketching, her dogs, a woman can fill the flying days, but inherently all such things are only escapes, though in time they may assume another hue. It is an odd fact that muddled thinking about abstractions, such as the Higher Thought rubbish of which women are so readily the victims, is often practised by the hardest-headed females when, for some reason or other, they have missed their natural vocation.

Many single women are, naturally, most pleasant and intelligent. But just as one can scarcely help, out of a sort of nervousness, doing the very things one knows will annoy an irritable person, so such women, contrary to their own advantage, often insist in hanging up a "not wanted" sign when there is no valid reason for it. They emphasize a distaste they may have acquired merely as a protection, and they let it be bruited abroad that they are out of the running when they might well be in the running.

This, admittedly, is an extreme type, but it is an attitude which, in varying degrees, hosts of women adopt unnecessarily. It is not, I suppose, that most of them are purposely trying to forestall rebuffs, though middle age is a sensitive period for a spinster, but that they are tired of struggling and feel that nothing is of use any longer. Life has passed them by and therefore they avert their heads when they see its shadow.

But it must be remembered that many spinsters are strong-willed women to whom the idea of matrimony never did appeal. For if forty-nine women out of fifty—a low estimate—gain a new freedom by marriage, the fiftieth has her liberty curtailed and her career jeopardized. And so, when we see a group of such women we must not assume that their brusque independence of manner is simply the outcome of spinsterhood, though we may speculate as to whether, if they had married, they would not have grown more womanly in the just meaning of the word.

At any rate, numerous women, who started out as conventional in their behaviour and their tastes, gradually become "difficult" if, for some reason or other, they do not marry. Every woman, of course, has to face her years of perplexity and strain, but while a married woman generally swings back into the regular current of her life, a spinster is liable to emerge from those years with a temperament soured into eccentricity. This change is too frequent not to be governed by some law, and though here again physiology may supply half the answer, I feel that the aridity—an aridity, by the way, which can be excessively explosive—is largely concerned with an emotional inaptitude for solitariness and sterility.

In brief, I think that most women are less able than most men

to endure an isolated existence—and existence can be very isolated in the midst of a bustling whirl. Something shrivels at the root of their spirit, and the fact that many elderly spinsters will stand no “nonsense” and are competent to the point of truculence is no argument against this statement. Women are naturally plucky, and rather than admit defeat they will don an armour which in its efficiency keeps, of set purpose, pity at bay. For they are well aware that the convinced spinster is often secretly derided, and they resent so falsely superior a pose.

But while some women, as I say, do not marry because they have unbending personalities and definite objectives, others do not marry because there is that about them which is fundamentally frightening or unattractive to men. This is not a question of looks; it is a question of individuality, and therefore it just cannot be helped. One recognizes such women when one meets them, though I really would not know how to define them accurately. But in his novel, *My Wife's the Least of It*, William Gerhardt describes a woman of this sort with perception: “Miss Purcell was a member of the vast class, ‘surplus women,’ a spinster who owed her single station to a combination of qualities which intimidated suitors, inasmuch as she was herself fastidious. She was one of those women who go in for modern photography, rhythmic breathing, interior decoration.” The picture of her eternal spinsterhood is telling enough, but I suspect that her hobbies were its result rather than its cause.

The reasons which keep women single are probably as multifarious as the reasons which induce them to marry, but the problem of the “surplus women” mentioned in the quotation is one of the commonest and most tragic of all. Of course, plenty of women partially solve this problem outside the conventions; but there is for most of them little satisfaction in those temporary liaisons, and monogamy, for all its advantages to women, does a minority of them a disservice in a country, such as England, where there are more women than men.

Thus it happens that many a woman who wants to marry, and certainly would marry were circumstances different, does not marry. It is a sad outcome, for life is so arranged that, at some

time or other, practically every woman is attractive, or potentially attractive, to some man. But it is like playing musical chairs : there are not sufficient seats to go round. This is the type of woman, neither strong-willed nor disagreeable, who, as she grows older, does not exhibit a biting dislike of men but a fluttering regard for them. But unfortunately the second posture is as distasteful as the first, and almost the only single women who remain fresh and unaffected into middle age are those who, for private reasons locked in the past, have thrown away a great opportunity.

But recollections, however dear and poignant, are no lasting bulwark against reality, and the spinster whose brisk demeanour and blithe smile spread an air of happiness around her must often be covertly unhappy ; and especially now that a wider freedom has entered women's lives and they cannot but feel that perhaps their sacrifices or their scruples solved nothing and were of no avail. Too late, too late ! Which of us, man and woman alike, has not uttered that cry, only to try to drown the echo.

I am convinced, indeed, that the thought of wasted opportunities haunts many an ageing woman. For even if there were no precise opportunities she missed, she feels that she might have made them and done better for herself. Vanished incidents throng upon her, faces emerge from the gloom, and she cannot forgive herself for letting the years slip by only to leave her desolate. Sweetness remains with a woman who can hold close to her heart the memory of a loss she could not have avoided—a loss, such as death, coming to her in the tide of rapture ; but when she knows that hers was the fault or the deficiency, she may drench her very being in asperity. Women's stoicism often turns inward, and contempt for herself may breed hatred of mankind.

Although the middle-aged spinster is the obvious person to choose when discussing women without men, nevertheless she is only part of the picture and perhaps I have devoted too much space to her. For my contention is that women, as a class, are somehow failures if they have not men by their side. They are, I repeat, not quite real in the company of other women, and it needs the presence of a man to animate them. I do not mean

merely that many women brighten up when they see a man approaching, just as many men automatically straighten their ties and smooth their hair when they see a woman approaching, but that "virtue," in the Biblical sense, flows back into them. Of course, this is a male argument at which masses of women would scoff, and no doubt correctly so far as they themselves are concerned, but all the same it is getting near some truth which words cannot altogether express.

Men are gregarious as regards men, but women, apart from young girls, are not gregarious as regards women, although they are driven to appear so for all sorts of reasons. I do not much admire the type of woman who dislikes women but is gay in a company of men, but she is probably nearer the basic principle of womanhood than the type that derives its only solace from female society. She may be, and often is, worthless as an individual, while the other type may be genuine ; but at least she is not denying the foundations on which sex is built. For the gregariousness of men has nothing to do with dislike of women, whereas the gregariousness of women is frequently a gesture directed against men or fate.

It may be said that remarks like this are mere assumptions and that no man is entitled to dogmatize about women. But every man has a right to his own observation, and though the male line of thought does not run level with the female line of thought, yet I believe one can arrive at general truths without tracing every link. If I am too optimistic, why is it that nearly all men seem to have much the same ideas as I on this subject ? Of course, nearly all women have, on their part, some definitely unfavourable ideas about men, and, though I am not denying their relative accuracy, the explanation in each case may be that certain things in the spirit of either sex are innately incomprehensible to the other and cannot be analysed in terms applicable to them both.

On the whole, men and women are at their best when leading lives which call for some diminution of their egos and the daily practice of tolerance. It is true that there are more unselfish spinsters than unselfish bachelors, for women are naturally more unselfish than men ; but, conversely, the spinster inclines to become

more mannered than the bachelor and at least as fixed in her routine. Both develop corners that need to be rubbed off. But married couples have not alone the critical companionship of each other by which to discipline themselves, but a multitude of family interests demanding liberality of mind. To keep pace with the younger generation is in itself enough to renew one's youth and prevent the forming of habits.

I am surprised that more spinsters, childless widows, and even childless wives do not adopt children. It is a gamble, I grant, and may go immediately against the grain, but it must be one of the most satisfactory of all remedies for warding off boredom and futility. That is to say, for the type of woman—the vast majority—whose maternal instinct, however dormant, is her final appeasement. This is a hunger which men can appreciate only by seeing the results when it is satisfied, and if adoption were more widely accepted as a helpful procedure, I fancy it would become much commoner.

As it is, the childless woman has, often entirely and always partially, to depend on herself, and Nature never meant women to depend on themselves. For exceptional women the thought of relying on a man for support and company may be an insult, but I am talking about average women. The fight is too much for them, if not materially, then emotionally, and in the result they lose, or are apt to lose, their more appealing feminine qualities and encourage, without realizing it, their more uncompromising feminine qualities.

But when all is said and done, the problem of the solitary woman presents many puzzles beyond logical solution. For there are things in a woman's psychology dark as the Ituri Forest, and it may be that women possess, as I suggested before, incommunicable compensations men have never apprehended.

CHAPTER VII

WOMEN'S DISTRUST OF WOMEN

THE generalization that all women are instinctive rivals seems about as true as any generalization, and though the number of women who are conscious rivals is, naturally, a mere drop in the bucket, nevertheless the number of women who distrust one another mainly because of this primitive instinct is legion. Individually they may like other women, they may even in many instances feel more at home with them than they do with men, but they are suspicious of them as a class.

I used the word "mainly" because women, knowing the odd kinks in their own natures, and being in most things remarkably free from illusions about themselves, are apt to doubt the reliability and balance of their sisters. There is no particular malice in this doubt; they accept it as a matter of course. Their own limitations only serve to make their judgment more exacting.

This distrust, it must be admitted, is often justified. It is a truism to say that women can be extremely ruthless to one another—extremely ruthless and extremely unscrupulous. Nearly every girl learns without a single lesson the arts of enchantment, and when a woman wants a mate she flies, by apparently devious routes, straight to her goal. The intuitive cunning of thousands of years is in her blood, and there is but too much truth in the quip about her effortless and perfect work reducing man to the condition of a fish who has only to be played with tact and guile to be safely landed. And then, as if there were not enough trouble in the world already, along comes another woman!

Moreover, many women delight in showing their power even when their status is fixed. To them their sex appeal is something which must always be kept bright, and they have no qualms in exercising it to the hurt of others. I suppose that the women who actually enjoy breaking up friendships and destroying the peace of

homes are relatively few, but those who do so without giving it a thought one way or the other are numerous. Women are huntresses, for thus they have developed, but they do not always retire from the field when their own hunt has ended. The love of the chase and of the kill has got hold of them, and if they soon tire when they are successful, they soon begin to feel hungry again.

The mere fact that women are constantly laughing at their own and other women's "cattiness" shows that they are quite aware of this trait, springing from distrust, and have a certain contempt for it, while yielding to it. The feeling is itself a normal one, for even the best woman's life is a struggle, but it has long since grown beyond the confines of a simple sex rivalry and now enters deeply into her whole approach to existence.

Sit in the entrance lounge of a large hotel and watch how the elderly women sitting there beside you will, with scarcely an exception, follow with disapproving eyes and pursed lips every young, pretty, and well-dressed girl who passes through. Most of these women are doubtless strait-laced and desiccated beyond all hope, but that does not prevent them from being filled with an instinctive jealousy of other women. Their gorge rises at the sight of happiness and you can see them positively bridle. Why should others be gay if *their* chance is over? Their anger against time takes the form of anger against youth.

Needless to say, all women are not like this, for some are touched by the sight of girls enjoying themselves and find comfort in the re-creation of their own memories; but all the same, the tendency to become puritanical as they grow older—a puritanism based on bafflement rather than on morality—is very marked among women. Their instinct of rivalry has outlived its purpose and has turned into a crabbed disapproval of women as women.

Though women are often tender-hearted to one another and broadminded enough to make excuses for each other's weaknesses, yet it is also true that cruelty to, and about, their own sex is ingrained. The average girl would rather face a jury of men than a mixed jury, and where moral delinquency is concerned women are frequently pitiless. Of course, there is a type which blames

men for everything, but it is much rarer than the type which blames women for everything. Why, otherwise, should it be a recognized fact that women are "down" on women? Men, in a woman's eyes, are blunderers, but women are calculating and heartless and deserve whatever comes to them.

One might argue that virtuous women are only upholding the honour of their sex by being merciless to feminine frailty. But often, I surmise, the unforgivingness of such women arises, physiologically rather than consciously, from the recollection of lost opportunities and from the knowledge that their own virtue is now a necessity. For women who are merciless to women are sometimes compassionate to men, and the more one studies them, the more one perceives that their sense of justice is so personal as to be fluid.

I am not disputing that women have as strong ideas about conduct in men as in women; I am only saying that they are not impartial. They can read motives into other women which, in their tortuous ingenuity, suggest that they are interpreting their own thoughts, and they can whitewash men with such a flourish that it even surprises the whitewashed. Preconceptions and personalities get jumbled in their minds, and from it all emerges a philosophy capable of answering any problem in a dozen different ways. And meanwhile they have no sense of being inconsistent; that is one of the frightening things about them.

If a man dislikes another man he will either keep away from him or show his distaste by the cold formality of his manner. But a woman may detest another woman and yet call her "darling," and will force herself to meet with kisses and endearments women whom she regards as poisonous. It is all a sort of convention, because women know just where they stand with other women, and it is a convention founded on mutual fear. Women have always been able to manage men through their sex, or believed they could so manage them, and they have always distrusted other women, who judge precisely where their armour can be pierced and have no hesitation in piercing it. And therefore they avoid open unpleasantness among themselves and take their revenge by veiled rejoinders and barbed words dipped in

syrup. A woman's politeness to other women differs but little from an alert truce.

Men usually stand up for one another unless they feel a personal animosity, but many women are, so to speak, automatically spiteful about their women acquaintances and love to pour their antipathy into some masculine ear. Yet their interest in other women is intense and undying and they watch each other's every move like skilful chess-players. Because women fear women they have a grudging respect for them and will even delude themselves into thinking that they are more dangerous than they really are. Indeed, by over-emphasis a woman will sometimes conjure up what she is trying to avert. A man does not fall in love with every girl he meets, but women hold that men are susceptible to the point of idiocy; and if a woman sees a man she cares for talking animatedly, however casually, to an attractive damsel, she is liable to ask him so acidly and so repeatedly what he can find in such a scheming little hussy that she may end by putting ideas into his head.

For men read the signs of feminine jealousy just as clearly as women read the signs of masculine jealousy, and if a woman is perpetually running down some other woman who may have exhibited a mild interest in a man, he is only too likely to preen himself and wonder whether another "conquest" is at hand. This is a paltry masculine habit, but women ought to be wise enough to keep men's fickleness beneath the surface by knowing not only what to say, but also what not to say. But jealousy in both men and women has a hideous capacity for bringing about the very thing it would most avoid. If only one could be jealous up to the pitch which flatters and not, as is almost invariably the case, up to the pitch which bores!

It is natural that women should, in the ordinary way, prefer the company of men to the company of women. But it seems curious that many a woman, in an effort to warn a man against other women, or merely out of the gratification of abuse, will tell him in the plainest of language how spoilt and deceptive the feminine sex is. A woman such as this does not perceive, or, perceiving, does not care, that in doing so she is cheapening herself.

She thinks that her apparent frankness, if perhaps a feminine foible, makes her the more attractive, and that though she may admit, by implication, to faults in herself, they are somehow on a different level. It is a bit muddled, but not without a grain of truth. After all, it depends on how things are put whether they appear despicable or delightful. And a man to whom a woman confides usually believes that, where *he* is concerned, she is an exception to the very defects she may have acknowledged.

In certain directions women understand one another infinitely more accurately and subtly than men can ever do, and if they cared could furnish them with a hundred hints, though I suspect that a good many of such hints would be wasted through men's failure to appreciate the shades. That appraising glance one woman gives another takes in all kinds of points a man would miss, and in her general instinct to safeguard herself against a possible rival every strength and weakness is weighed instantaneously. Indeed, it might be argued that women know one another intuitively and that Ben Jonson spoke only the truth when he wrote in *The New Inn*: "One woman reads another's character without the tedious trouble of deciphering."

And yet in this very understanding women purposely mislead one another. One has only to observe two women wrapt in conversation to see that they have entered a region wherein men have no footing. All the same, though at such times the very fact of men is a mere extraneous buzzing on the outside, they are not being wholly confidential. In their mutual, inherent jealousy it is literally impossible for women to be quite frank with their own sex. A woman's view, in some directions, is innately distorted, and it is questionable whether she has indeed a clear picture of herself. My own belief is that women are mysteries to other women, mysteries to men, and mysteries—yes, finally—to themselves. For though they are born with a large fund of common sense, which is enhanced by their education, and are less likely than men to lose their heads, yet their actions are often motivated by impulses of which they scarcely discern the workings, and they frequently keep such open minds as to their future line of conduct that it is eventually arranged for them by circumstances which they have

ceased to regulate. What does Thackeray say (*Mr. Brown's Letters*)? : "When I say that I know women, I mean that I know that I don't know them. Every single woman I ever knew is a puzzle to me, as I have no doubt she is to herself."

Women's instincts, brought to bear on modern problems, sometimes play them false, and though they distrust men on one plane as heartily as they distrust women on another, yet, because they feel they can always control a situation with a man, they are quite liable to be let down much more completely at his hands than at the hands of any woman. A bird, through an hereditary instinct, is more frightened of a hawk, from which it stands a reasonable chance of escaping, than of a man with a gun, from whom escape is difficult; and so, by analogy, is it with a woman. She will relax in a man's company after coming, say, from one of those ultra-feminine parties as if she had reached safety, but how often is she leaving the lesser peril for the greater? Her feeling is to distrust women in the social, men in the emotional, spheres; but whereas one kind of danger is tiresome, the other is exciting. Moreover, she cannot influence a woman, but she can influence a man—or so she believes. But it is very deceptive reasoning at times, for women get out of their depth when they least expect it and, being extremists at heart, are apt to plunge into a whirlpool.

Indeed, one of the things that perennially astonishes men about women is the recklessness of their behaviour once the rather thin veneer of their modesty has melted. They are, in fact, more reckless than men, though obviously they ought to be more cautious. That is why so many of them repent at leisure. *Au fond*, many women are amoral, and I am inclined to think that the discretion of their general bearing is as much a bulwark against women's slander as against men's rapacity. They go from primness to the reverse with hardly a word of explanation, and no man quite knows what to expect from minute to minute.

A theory is not strengthened by overstating it, and I would be the last to deny that many women form intimate friendships with other women and talk to them in tones they would never dream of using to a man. But while such friendships, especially

in the case of young women, often seem close, they are usually, though not invariably, superficial and guarded. The instinct of rivalry exists even though an immediate cause be absent, and despite their affectionate and secret confidences, such friends are ever on the look-out. They conceal their reticences under a mask of effusive candour.

But even women who trust one another as friends seldom trust one another in a material capacity. For example, can one imagine a woman employing another woman to supervise her financial affairs? Why, few women will trust even themselves in that respect! A woman of means, who may be of high intelligence, almost invariably regards the investing of funds and the care of capital as enigmas beyond her power of mastering and will leave all in the hands of lawyers or trustees to whom, mentally, she may be much superior. She will not exert herself to break down the musty convention that everything to do with money is a man's prerogative, just as she will not learn that to date her letters precisely is not merely a convenience to others but a shield for herself.

And not one woman in a score cares to be attended by a lady doctor, although one would have thought that it would have been just the reverse. Surely here is a case where women ought to call in women—but they do not. Indeed, they decline to do so in a manner so imperative as to suggest that the idea is preposterous—"Be attended by a woman doctor? Certainly not!" This distrust may be partly due to an instinctive bias, but I feel it is also partly due to women's rooted belief in the illogicality and instability of women in general.

I am well aware that women claim that it is men who are illogical, but they are using the word in a different significance. Otherwise, why do they rely on men in technical matters and not on women? What they mean by man's illogicality is his incapacity to follow their thoughts, his romantic cravings, his addiction to things that strike them as trivial, and, above all, the ease with which "designing" women can deceive him.

This last is something they really cannot comprehend. The fact that women often make fools of themselves with unscrupulous

men is ignored as if it were a fiction ; but the fact that men often get entangled with undesirable females appears to women a sign of their own sex's discreditable trickiness and the other sex's nasty gullibility. For to women, as a whole, men are precocious children with adult vices, and while this arouses their maternal instinct in one direction, it fills them with disgust in another. They are firmly of opinion that men need the protection of a woman against women, because they are babes at the game ; whereas, though they know that women are often in need of protection against men, they feel that they walk into trouble with their eyes open and should be able to look after themselves. •

And so we return to where we were at the beginning : women distrust one another because they are natural rivals. This, I agree, does less than justice to many a woman's conscious thoughts, but when one is dealing with anything so instinctive as these reactions, one can grasp the general truth only by ignoring the exceptions.

CHAPTER VIII

MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS

IN former times, when life changed but little from decade to decade and children were taught to regard their parents with reverential awe and heartfelt gratitude, the conflict of the generations, now such a regular feature of domestic life, must have been practised on a much-reduced scale. On the other hand, it is idle to pretend that it is a recent phenomenon, for children, whether secretly or openly, have been chafing against parental domination for as long a period as old people have been asserting that the world is going to the dogs and that in their young days everything was different.

And when I say children, I mean principally daughters; and when I say parents, I mean principally mothers. The male has always held a privileged position, and though his views may cause distress to his parents, they regard a son as someone who has to make his own way and consequently form his own opinions, regrettable though they may turn out to be. And as fathers are usually indulgent to their daughters, just as mothers are usually indulgent to their sons, and have, moreover, none of that mysterious jealousy which habitually exists, in some shape or other, between women and goes far deeper than conscious sex, the subtle battle of wills is almost invariably that of mothers and daughters.

As I have remarked, this is no new thing, though now, as not before, it is recognized and allowed for as a customary concomitant of family existence—recognized and allowed for, I should add, in every family save one's own. Readers of Jane Austen will recall that the Miss Bennets were not exactly under the sway of their mother—though it is hard to imagine anybody in any age being under Mrs. Bennet's sway!—and, long before that, Samuel Johnson wrote (the words are to be found in his *Miscellanies*): "You teach your daughters the diameters of the planets, and wonder

what you have done that they do not delight in your company." The old doctor gave a simple example, but he was quite shrewd enough to have intended it only as an instance which could be expanded to cover the whole everlasting clash between one age and the next.

While a girl is still young her mother's influence is paramount, and she is, despite the individual longings and woes of childhood, a copy in little of the woman who bore her. And thus a mother is sustained in all her worries and disappointments by the feeling that, in her daughter, she is justified to herself. She moulds her as she wishes, and in screening her with her love and protection she is convinced that there is a bond between them far too intimate for any kind of rift.

She may be devoted to her husband, she may feel as deep, perhaps even a deeper, affection for her son, but her daughter is her special possession, the one being who is herself in miniature and who will repay her later on by that perfect accord which no one else can ever give her. In her anxiety as to her girl's future there is a secret pride, and she is sure that even after she has grown up, married, and had children of her own, the tie will not be loosened, and that in her grandchildren she will recover her youth and see her hopes again fulfilled.

For she does not, somehow she *can* not, allow for the fact that as the daughter matures, not only does her individuality develop along its own lines, but she comes inevitably to face the problems around her with the eyes of her generation and not of her mother's generation. Thus, despite the truth that in most cases the daughter returns in flowing measure the love her mother has showered on her, a silent tug-of-war begins between them. This contest, which exists side by side with genuine endearments, is made all the more involved in that both mother and daughter, in trying to see the other's point of view, believe that they are meeting with stubborn resistance instead of sympathetic comprehension.

To a mother there is something bewildering about a daughter's resolve to be herself and not an echo of her; to a daughter there is something bewildering in her mother's inability to appreciate

that she *must* be herself. And because, through heredity and association, they are extremely alike even when they are most divergent, they understand one another only too well even when they do not, apparently, understand one another at all. That is to say, each knows exactly how much she is hurting or disappointing the other, although it is beyond her to behave in a different manner.

If one meets a person whose views are entirely opposed to one's own, one does not bother to argue; it is the friend who goes with one nine-tenths of the road whose remaining steps are so gallingly incomprehensible. So with mother and daughter; their disagreements are as nothing to their agreements, but it is the disagreements, insignificant though they may be, which seem able at times to cancel out the agreements. Many a mother who would do literally anything for her daughter has a voiceless grievance against her, because, in her opinion, she is not loyal in some way too imponderable for words to define; and many a daughter who worships her mother experiences a kind of dumb resentment against her for not perceiving that she really *is* doing everything in her power to live up to her mother's standards.

But just as the mother feels that her daughter owes her more than she will ever acknowledge—the old theological notion that a child should be thankful for being born has changed its complexion but is not really defunct—the daughter feels that the possessive instinct of her mother will stifle her unless she resists it. And so when both are intelligent women, with the pronounced personalities accompanying intelligence, a wariness creeps into their relationship and each watches the other, partly with the idea of forestalling complaints and partly with the idea of not being used as a footstool. A tension is created through their self-conscious efforts to avoid the very suggestion of its possibility.

A mother may feel that she is giving her daughter, in every direction, the freedom she asks for; while a daughter may feel, without a word being said, that there is a nullifying string attached to it. The benefactress is wounded to the quick because she senses that the beneficiary is accepting her gifts with a reservation

and will not reward her in the only form that matters ; and the beneficiary is made uncomfortable because she is aware that the gifts, however lavish, are granted, not grudgingly in themselves, but with a hope which, doomed to be disappointed, may turn into a grudge.

A mother craves for her daughter's total confidence, but the daughter cannot bestow that, for in doing so the abyss between them would be made evident and a useless, vexatious discussion be the only result. She knows that she wounds her mother, but though she tries to make up for it in every other fashion, she also knows that her efforts are seen through and judged accordingly. But she *must* live her own life, she *must* think her own thoughts, and she cannot grasp why her mother will not admit this and, admitting it, see that it does not alter by one iota her love and admiration.

As for the mother, she finds it very difficult to believe that her daughter is not crossing her of set purpose ; if the daughter but guessed how happy she could make her by being just a little different she could never allow her selfishness to shadow the light of complete, mutual understanding ! She is ready to do so much for her child, she always has done so much, and her only requital is to be disregarded and treated as a back number ! If this seems rather an unreasonable attitude, one must remember that, apart from anything else, it is a terrible disappointment to a mother to watch how, as the years go on, her daughter becomes, in certain vital aspects, less and less a portrait of herself.

Most mothers think they are generous discretion itself where their daughters are concerned, and most daughters think *they* are doing as much as can fairly be expected and are yielding all along the line. Who is to judge between them, when both, in their feverish attempts to close the breach, are merely revealing that there is a breach ?

It may be maintained that I am writing of special types, and I admit, of course, that with many mothers and daughters—probably with most—the relationship is much calmer ; but basically I am tracing a universal tendency. It is not alone that all people differ from one another and that two generations never see eye to eye, but that the questions which divide mother from daughter are so

complex and inevitable, even when they appear small and avoidable, that as soon as a girl grows into a woman a clash of wills can scarcely be avoided. In simple people it may assume a minor note, but it is always there. What mother does not feel occasionally the pangs of ingratitude; what daughter that her mother is being too possessive?

It happens now and then that a mother is actually jealous of her daughter's youth, but it is much more usual for her to resent her daughter's independence. Of course, this is a species of jealousy too, for in discerning that her daughter no longer needs her, a mother can hate the very thought of time's passage; but she nearly always wants her daughter to marry, and often her son-in-law becomes particularly dear to her. She feels instinctively that through him she may recover her daughter—this is over and above her innate conviction that marriage is the only status for a woman—and she knows that in due course she will, as I say, again experience the joy of giving out to those whose reciprocity is assured.

(It is odd to note, parenthetically, how, though a woman's maternal jealousy is seldom directed against a son-in-law, it is frequently directed against a daughter-in-law. A daughter's marriage is a sensible act, bringing with it the sanity of family responsibilities; but the average mother does not think that her son has married the woman he ought to have married. A curious kind of jealousy is apparent in her bearing and she is extremely liable to resent the fact that a strange woman has taken her son from her. Perhaps underlying it all is the ancient truth that women spoil their sons—at least, in their minds—more than they spoil their daughters. I do not mean, in any sense, that a mother thinks anyone is good enough for her daughter and no one good enough for her son, but only that she feels that, though marriage is the right thing for a woman, it is a hindrance to a man—unless *she* chooses the bride.)

In listening to a mother discussing her daughter or a daughter discussing her mother, one is often aware of a sort of frustrated love, and one's first reaction is that it would require merely a few sagacious remarks to put everything straight. But this is a delusion; each of them appears to see the other side, each longs

to do what is best, and yet neither, in the real things, will budge an inch, while both are persuaded that they pass their lives in giving in. The strange extremism of women, against which one comes up eternally, is all the stranger in that it is hidden under a deceiving air of softness. One does not know what to think, and perhaps it was Montaigne, in his *Essays*, who said the final word: "Feminine policy has a mysterious method; it is better to leave it to them."

I agree. The contentions between women, and especially between mothers and daughters, are so devious, so bound up with obscure repressions, that the words in which they can be expressed never really get near expressing them. The love a mother and her daughter have for each other—a love which can be so profound as to be almost more painful than happy—is often so inhibited that frankness becomes practically impossible. They will skirt round and round each other, but they will not come to grips, for neither credits the other—and more or less correctly—with any intention of compromising.

The commonest form a mother's jealousy of her daughter takes is to accuse her of being selfish in those small matters about which, if she wanted, she could be helpful. In a sense, this is very true. The younger generation *is* selfish, not over essential things, but over those very trifles that, just because it is there her girl fails her, loom so large in a mother's mind. But, after all, what are trifles? Is the mother right in expecting from her daughter this constant alertness; is the daughter wrong in letting her youth answer to the call of youth? Probably there is no definite answer. Girls are often careless because, in the exuberance of their vitality, they have many outside interests; but perhaps a mother is justified in considering that this lack of co-operation is not what she has deserved. She remembers how for years she denied herself for her daughter, and she feels that the least her daughter can do is to give her so glad an obedience and understanding that requests are unnecessary.

The theory may be sound, but people seldom learn from experience, and though the mother presumably behaved in her youth very much as her daughter is behaving now, she does not for one second believe the two things to be comparable: *her* mother

really tried to suppress her ; *she* is all liberality to her daughter! But it is only the conventions that change ; the meaning of such words as "suppression" and "freedom" depends on the generation you are addressing.

With one half of her brain a mother tries to keep sympathetic pace with her daughter's modernism, but with the other half she is, despite herself, censorious of behaviour or ideas in advance of her own. As for the daughter, while she appreciates the integrity of her mother's outlook and her desire for her wellbeing, she cannot help feeling that in the maternal wisdom there is something outworn and in the maternal kindness something pleading. She can follow her mother's approach to existence ; why cannot her mother follow hers ?

Many a mother mourns in privacy over her daughter's refractoriness, which, explain it as she may, still seems like a conscious revolt against her influence ; and many a daughter responds with that sort of hardness which, bitter though it may eventually become, is ready to melt in an instant if only her mother would be more reasonable.

For this hardness of youth, that parents so dread and detest, though partly, no doubt, originating in the self-sufficient optimism of the young, is also deliberately adopted as an armour against the reiterated claims of age. Daughters fear those appeals which, while tearing their hearts, undermine their rectitude, and so fall back on a core of hardness as their salvation. The "mother-knows-best" type of attitude can drive a young woman almost frantic.

A good deal of the trouble arises from the fact that mothers and daughters are not always tactful in their dealings with one another. They think they are being tactful because they wish to be tactful, but their feelings are too strong for them, with the result that their souls peep through their eyes and they make one another miserable.

If I appear to over-stress the underlying conflict in the relationship of mother and daughter, it is for the reason that this is the most psychologically arresting feature. But in a bond so close there is also a great deal of tenderness and delight, and, as happens

in all human affairs, periods of harmony and disharmony seem to follow one another on no recognized principle. A sudden emotional encounter, an unexpected gesture of imagination, may momentarily affect the whole aspect of affairs and make grievances themselves appear petty and remote. The significance of many things depends on the mood, and in those hours of felicity a mother and daughter, long sundered by invisible barriers, can be again as they were when the girl was a child.

And apart from that there is a normal, surface relationship which is happy for both of them. As I have already observed, the points on which they differ are far fewer than the points on which they agree, and, generally speaking, they are able to keep to agreement. The tone of their minds is similar, however their opinions may branch apart, and there is a common ground on which they can meet to their mutual satisfaction. Indeed, it is clear that, in one respect, nobody and no opinion could ever come between mother and daughter. Theirs is a tie which would not cause the acute anxiety it does if it did not also cause an incommunicable joy. And one is conscious that in all the misunderstandings that may arise—misunderstandings so intricate and nebulous as to be beyond any final solution—there is always on the mother's side a protecting sense of pity and on the daughter's side an agonizing sense of regret. Perhaps for both of them one might say, altering slightly that sentence of long ago: To her who has loved much, much shall be forgiven.

Whether mothers and their daughters will agree with my main argument is questionable; but though we all give our own values to words according to our sex, predilections and experience, yet I do feel that, however one phrases it, there are in this relationship certain inherent problems seldom faced realistically.

CHAPTER IX

FEMININE RUTHLESSNESS

THE conventional idea that women are soft and yielding is probably, after all allowance has been made for individual experience, based on a physical, rather than a mental, conception. In their appearance and their texture they do have the delightful assets suggested by these adjectives, but in their minds women are harder and more ruthless than men.

This, I admit, does not square with the well-known phrase about being "tender-hearted as a woman," but that is one of those expressions which, as an indication of feminine character, is extremely misleading. Of course, women *can* be tender-hearted to specific persons and very gentle in their normal relationships with others, but in the tenderest-hearted and gentlest of them there is an absolutely adamant streak.

Why this should be so may be regarded as rather strange, but by nature women are extremists—how often one has to repeat it!—and once they make up their minds to a course of conduct they show themselves inflexible. If poor old Cardinal Wolsey found it impossible to influence Henry VIII by his arguments, it is no more than millions of ordinary men have found when appealing, with all the force at their command, to women who up to then may have seemed pliable and even submissive.

The truth is that when a woman has crossed a certain line her tenderness turns to stone. Indeed, feminine reactions are liable to be intensely violent, and as soon as a woman's love for a man ceases, ruthlessness takes its place. Nothing can recall her vanished feelings, and the efforts to do so, however moving and sincere, only result in icy snubs. In those eyes which formerly glowed with surrender there is now a savage stare and from those lips which used to whisper devotion pours calculated abuse.

There is something rather sinister in this metamorphosis, even when the man is mostly to blame, something which suggests a ferocious cruelty and egotism lurking beneath the surface ; but one must remember that when a woman feels herself in a false position she loses her obvious, and reverts to her primitive, femininity. And in that state there are no such words as "pity" and "compassion"; there is only the overwhelming desire to escape by scratching and tearing. It is simply the way her brain works and cannot be judged by the usual standards.

And it is all the same whether it be the woman who has grown weary or whether it be the woman who feels that her overtures are in vain. Hate lies nearer to love in her soul than in a man's soul, and it flowers with terrifying speed. Either boredom or misery can alter her personality with devastating results, and if she can injure and insult the man she so lately adored it produces a hot satisfaction in her blood. Literature contains many apt quotations to picture this phase, but perhaps nothing apter than the celebrated lines from Congreve's play, *The Mourning Bride* :—

Heaven hath no rage like love to hatred turn'd
Nor hell a fury like a woman scorn'd.

It may be argued that only a special type of passionate woman is capable of acting in such a manner, but though this is true enough when it comes to extreme manifestations, it is also true that in all women there are the possibilities of relentless antagonism. They are great haters, and though, while they are in love, they can be infinitely generous, once their love has gone the very strength which animated it animates the reaction.

But it is not only about love that women are ruthless ; their whole approach to life has something ruthless in it. Existence to them is largely a battle, conducted though it may be in velvet gloves, and as they are too realistic to indulge much in self-pity, they are, deep down, contemptuous of the sentimentality of men. Their basic hardness comes to men as a perennial surprise ; but if one wants to test it easily, try to lead a woman who does not intend to be led, or to influence a woman whose views are fixed. It matters not how friendly one may be with her, there is

a sudden tightening in her attitude and behind her smiling eyes the hint of a formidable gleam. Beneath their malleable exterior women are as tough as leather, and at one time or another every man has been puzzled by this phenomenon.

Yet, as I have already said, the apparent contradiction is no contradiction at all. Woman's life is passed in emotions and in ruses, and all angles of her complex personality are exhibited, sometimes directly, sometimes artfully, in the ebb and flow of hopes and schemes. One must never take a woman too much for granted; it is the surest way of losing touch with the real person and of arousing that in her which ought never to be aroused. When a woman is tried too far—and most women can stand a great deal and will go on and on until, spiritually, they drop in their tracks—she is prone to give up all of a sudden and retire into that sort of numbness which for her is a symptom of nervous overstrain. The hardness of women is, on occasion, no more than a sign of utter collapse.

A man seldom appreciates this even when he is the principal cause of such conduct, for as a woman loses control of herself her tongue becomes hatefully calm in its envenomed cogency; but nevertheless that kind of feminine hysteria which is bound up with her sex and colours her outlook in hours of stress does exhaust itself finally in an inhuman, callous indifference. Her sensibilities appear to wither and she is no longer affected in the slightest degree by those very things which, only a few days before, may have reduced her to tears and entreaties.

In this stage it is entirely useless to offer explanations or apologies to a woman; she is beyond all that. Even her expression has dreadfully changed—though sometimes in that change there is the glimpse of an anguish which lacerates the heart—as if a baleful *alter ego* had taken charge, and in one second the delicate filaments that held you together in sympathy and understanding have been rent asunder. Indeed, her frenzied effort is now to avoid the one person who has hitherto been the apple of her eye and without whose presence life has seemed empty of purpose. Women have just so much emotional reserve, and once that goes nothing is left them save a frantic urge to smash their encircling

complications. Their systems respond subconsciously to this call, and just as unbearable physical pain makes people faint, so unbearable mental pain produces apathy.

Men have a curious capacity for hoping after hope has been logically abandoned; but women, being more imperious and more ruthless, can cut hope completely out of their lives. But in the process of doing so their souls, smitten prostrate, are drained of all feeling, even the feeling of active bitterness. The slate of the past is wiped clean, and a woman who has endured too much can write to her former lover as if he were a ghost. All is over, everything is forgotten, and many a woman who once loved dearly and, as she believed, for ever, could echo Rossetti's mournful words in *The House of Life* :—

Look in this face : my name is Might-Have-Been ;
I am also called No-More, Too-Late, Farewell.

Oblivion is too often and too needlessly the grave of a woman's love.

In exaltation or in weariness women act extravagantly, and love, in its different steps, brings out the best and the worst in them—things indescribably grand or tragically base and, in either instance, far beyond anything of which they imagined themselves to be capable. If happiness soars to the empyrean, misery has barbed fangs. Naturally, women would say the same of men, and I do not deny that they are entitled so to do. But men, being less ruthless than women, whether in giving all or taking all away, do not, as a rule, exhibit such obscurely insurgent rebounds. To a considerable extent these symptoms, in both sexes, depend on the special individuality, but by and large men are more balanced in their mental processes. Or perhaps I ought to say, more cautious. The average man is probably no kinder than the average woman, and just as egocentric. But men do not harden their hearts so readily or so readily allow love to drown faults or hate to drown obligations.

One cannot with impunity injure a woman's pride, and that Canadian who wrote under the pseudonym of "Sam Slick" was perfectly correct when he said that women forgive injuries, but

never forget slights. I agree that we all, men as much as women, find slights difficult to forgive, for the most undignified of us cherish our dignity and nobody can abide rebuffs; but while a man is only too anxious to be persuaded by a woman of whom he is fond that she did not really mean the abuse she hurled at him, a woman is apt to develop a resentment which can never be appeased. Who has not witnessed examples of this, who has not experienced the sudden ending of a friendship he believed to be inviolable? Women can be very vindictive, and to wound a woman's self-esteem is to awaken this vindictiveness in its most ruthless form.

And yet, as Sam Slick suggests, women are generous in forgiving injuries a man might find it hard to forgive. It is, for instance, infinitely easier for most women to overlook marital infidelities than it is for most men to overlook them. Generally speaking, women object to loose behaviour just as strongly as do men and are hurt by it just as surely; but then they know men to be weak, while men, being romantic and gullible, usually convince themselves that the women *they* marry cannot but be faithful.

The exceptions to any such statement are innumerable, but it may be said that, though a woman is prepared to forgive more often than a man in such circumstances, once she has resolved that matters have come to a head she is more completely inexorable than a man would be if appealed to for one more chance. Men have a touching faith in the power of their own eloquence, but they do not perceive that, successful as their pleading may have been up to now, a moment arrives when they might just as well save their breath. The adamant woman is as adamant as a hanging judge.

The ruthlessness of women is, I repeat, one example of their extremism, and it often displays the tonic quality of a cleansing wind. However much a woman may normally act a part, when she decides that the moment has arrived for a vital decision, she insists on brushing aside obstructions and on being herself. Men try to discover ways round an obstacle, but women prefer to hack a path straight through. They feel in their bones when things have reached saturation-point, and they set themselves the task, with immovable will, of clearing up the position once for all.

And they are not to be deflected from their purpose by what to them are minor considerations. Thus the ruthlessness they display at such times may be witness rather to their steely resolve than to their lack of feeling, though one usually follows upon the other. They do not permit themselves the luxury of emotion, because they know—or think they know—that it would solve nothing for long but only stir up trouble all over again.

But, of course, extremism is a thing which inevitably vitiates judgment. When women decide finally on a line of conduct, wisdom may have less to do with it than anger and therefore their decision may be wrong. For they are apt to leap to conclusions which, to begin with, may be false or, secondly, may be due to conditions for which they are partly responsible. The fury engendered by unhappiness may blind a woman to the truth and result in the unnecessary ruin of two lives. When a woman is sure that she is saving herself she may, in reality, be cutting off her nose to spite her face. But it is seldom any use trying to apportion blame between men and women; their folly invites disaster and the gods are, indeed, athirst.

The hardness (or realism) of women is evident on every hand. When one hears, as one always is hearing, about some woman who cannot keep her domestic servants, it is sometimes to be accounted for by her attitude towards them, though, maybe, an angel could not keep servants nowadays. Because she persuades herself that they are waiting to take advantage of her, she forestalls them, and her manner to them, however fairly intended, is tinged with a stony suspiciousness which nullifies everything.

This inconsiderateness on the part of women may be very mortifying to a man, who against his better judgment is often forced into a position of having to administer rebukes to servants which he scarcely thinks justified and would, in any case, much rather keep to himself. He does not believe in perfectibility; but women, who are actually just as sceptical, keep the idea of it before them as a kind of yard-measure. All the same, one must admit that while women servants prefer the easy-going natures of men, they respect the firm, uncompromising natures of women, provided they are not tried too drastically. A woman would

rather serve a man than a woman, but she does feel that in serving a woman she is doing her proper job. For many a bullied woman would bully if she got the opportunity, and women understand one another without apologies being necessary.

And I dare say all this consoles those shop-girls who have to maintain a cheerful politeness when, after the whole place has been turned inside out, they are curtly informed by a female customer that nothing is suitable. A husband feels desperately abashed on such occasions, but no faintest contrition shows on his wife's countenance. Of course, she is sensible not to buy what she does not want, but it is the ruthless unconcern of her manner which is so upsetting to a male.

Women have an inborn contempt for that leniency or weakness that come so readily to a man. A man left to himself permits a latitude in the running of his house, provided he is reasonably comfortable, which is abhorrent to a woman. True, it is a woman's business to look after the home and keep things up to the mark, but she could not be so competent in this direction unless there was about her that sort of hardness which makes no allowance for small failings. Peace and quiet are more to a man than efficiency, but they are less to a woman.

The special characteristics of men and women have, no doubt, their roots in the obscure labyrinth of sex, and there must always be something about such characteristics which can only be explained by general statements beyond analysis. But the conscious and the unconscious are inextricably blended in human nature and people are perpetually taking advantage of their inherited idiosyncracies. For instance, though women are born with this ruthless streak in them—a streak very likely tied up with self-protection—they have allowed it to develop in many cases into an unscrupulous streak and have so obtained personal advantage out of a moral failing.

Women, on the whole, have no very delicate sense of honour when they are agitated, and thus that natural hardness which emerges in a crisis is not tempered by the remorse which men of the same calibre—that is to say, neither better nor worse than themselves—would probably feel. Hardness is a very useful

quality when it *has* to be employed and women often show a strength of purpose in which men, who like to temporize, are pitifully lacking; but it sometimes happens that women are hard simply because they are unscrupulous: giving pain to others is as nothing to the fulfilment of their own desires.

In considering the unpleasant or the alarming aspects of femininity, we must assume that there are just as many evil women in the world as evil men. One is somehow averse to facing this, because, especially where a young and pretty woman is involved, it seems like a contradiction. But it is true. In her sex infatuation an evil woman may shower benefits of every description on a man and encompass him with all the wiles of passion; but once she wearies of him—and such women invariably weary soon—her personal worthlessness is added, as one might put it, to her extremism as a female, with the result that she reveals herself as devilish in her lack of magnanimity and her disregard of feelings.

Of course, it often happens that some man, made unspeakably forlorn by a woman, reads wickedness into her actions when she is only exhibiting the cornered ruthlessness of her sex, plus the cruelty generated by exhaustion, in ending an impossible situation; but then it also often happens that while all is flourishing he reads a spiritual beauty into her which, as an inherent quality of her character, is largely delusive. The behaviour of most people in love affairs depends on the behaviour of the other concerned, and where sex is at work the unexplored recesses of personality, both in men and women, may yield either salves or poisons. The whole thing is relative, and if happiness can produce noble reactions, unhappiness can produce ignoble reactions. As one substance, through catalysis, will bring about a chemical change in another substance without itself undergoing alteration, so passion can turn egotism into unselfishness or tenderness into hatred.

One can arrive at no final conclusion as to feminine ruthlessness. Why it lies hidden under meek disguises only to emerge like a hideous jack-in-the-box may be a subject of speculation, but never of ultimate knowledge. The point to keep before one's mind is that it *does* exist; once that is forgotten, danger is at hand.

CHAPTER X

SEX ANTAGONISM

IN analysing the relations between men and women I think sufficient allowance is not made for that latent antagonism which is, as one might put it, part of the attraction. It does not, as a rule, take the personal form the attraction is so likely to take, but my contention is that, deep down, the sexes are obscurely opposed to each other even while they are openly drawn to each other.

Novelists and poets tend to dwell on the romantic slant of the association, whether in its heyday or its decline, and even when they discuss the fears and doubts which are common in young lovers or the revulsions and discouragements which break engagements or the bickerings and boredoms which ruin marriages, they do not face the fact that the "warfare of the sexes" is a much more pungent warfare than the ordinary, rather sentimental, interpretation of the phrase allows for.

It is true that, just as the physical differences between men and women are the basis of a mutually invincible attraction, so the mental differences, carrying the physical to another sphere, are an added incentive—nature's supplementary trick in a civilized garb. But too sweeping a generalization in this direction may mislead one. In the very strength of the physical allurements there lurks a faint sense of the ridiculous; and in the mental contrast, so bound up with the appeal of sex, there is a vague feeling of unrest.

In most people this double undercurrent is kept within reasonable limits, partly because life is governed by a natural sanity and partly because, when choosing their mates, individuals follow their most powerful instincts; but this does not invalidate the argument that to some extent all sex attraction carries in its heart a substratum of sex antagonism.

This substratum expands rapidly when, from any of the

innumerable causes which destroy love, affection dies. In such cases the physical hold can become nauseating and those mental contrasts which used to delight, insipid beyond measure. That is one of the reasons, no doubt, why love affairs and marriages, once really dissolved—for they are often not really dissolved when they appear to be—are dissolved so utterly. The instincts that created them have given place to those other instincts which, always in the background and, like the pale whiff of a pervasive odour, not altogether unpleasing in their proper place, only emerge inexorably under stress of circumstance.

But it sometimes, and not very seldom, happens that a man and a woman will experience a violent mutual dislike on their first encounter. Of course, I know that men are also capable of taking a violent dislike to one another before they are even introduced and I presume the same is true of women and women; but this instantaneous mutual dislike of men and women suggests the unloosing of that sex antipathy which usually remains quiescent or unknown unless there be some specific reason for its appearance, some goad which stings it into reality. It can be, in its force, as vehement as first love and there is something about it so apparently illogical, and therefore frightening, that the people whom it affects are almost breathless with dismay.

It is a very curious phenomenon indeed, and if one has ever felt it, or even watched it, a new train of ideas on the subject is opened up. For though some may argue that such immediate antagonisms are due solely to a clash of temperaments and are without significance, I suspect they have their roots in subconscious sex. Neither behaviour nor looks, save in so far as hate brings coldness into the voice and ugliness into the face, have necessarily anything to do with it; it seems to be concerned with something much more fundamental. Chance, shall we hazard, has brought together a man and a woman whose personalities, influenced by their sex, strike from one another not the bright sparks which are so usually struck, but black, malignant sparks.

Dostoevsky, in his own line the greatest of all literary psychologists, profounder, in my opinion, than Proust, gives a marvel-

lous picture of this emotion in *The Possessed*, from which I quote a passage, not impressive in itself, for such a situation has to be worked up, but as showing that he understood perfectly those seemingly groundless hatreds between the sexes: "It is remarkable that the schoolboy conceived an almost murderous hatred of her from the first moment, though he saw her for the first time in his life, and she felt the same for him."

Sex has, of course, manifold channels of expression, but in the same way as a man appreciates at once whether his quarrel with a girl is of the kind that can be made up or of the kind that is irreparable—although, on the surface, one may appear to be no more serious than the other—so does he recognize at once whether the mutual dislike be momentary or eternal. For when it is of the eternal type, it produces such a backwash of unpleasant sensations that he knows, without a word, that everything is hopelessly wrong.

The presence in the same room of a man and a woman who feel this instinctive animosity may charge the atmosphere and embarrass everybody. How can people maintain that it has nothing whatever to do with sex and is a mere personal idiosyncrasy? I suggest, on the contrary, that it is redolent of sex. And this is seen unmistakably in those cases in which, as sometimes happens with that twisted irony life delights in, it is only one of the two who feels repulsion. For though in extreme instances it is invariably mutual, it is not rare for it to be entirely one-sided. What humiliation and misery are the result! The proximity of somebody who loves you may, against all your resolve not to wound, turn you to ice, and it is no more possible to conceal that emotional freezing than, in happier surroundings, it is possible to conceal an emotional melting.

But, oddly enough, an immediate distaste, falling short of inherent antipathy (which is probably quite incurable), at times actually changes to love, and one frequently hears a girl declare: "He was the last man I ever thought I should marry; I positively disliked him when I met him first." The explanation of this may be simple, however: to begin with, early impressions can be deceptive and, secondly a man is apt to be put on his mettle by

noticing that a girl, whom he finds appealing, appears to shrink from him and will therefore make a special effort to be at his best.

In all contacts between men and women, however free of obvious sex, this sleeping enmity is liable to show its head at the most unexpected moments. A woman may be on the friendliest terms with a man, but yet at the slightest sign of a casual endearment, arising only out of friendship and meaning nothing, he may catch in her eye a glint of horror and hear words from her he never expected to hear. And on the mental plane the same sort of thing may also happen: he may start a conversation with some woman which, though it be innocent of innuendo and deal only with general ideas, may stiffen her into rabid hostility in an instant. It is very disconcerting—and very revealing.

In giving these examples I am not talking about anti-man feminists; I am talking about the ordinary run of women with whom one is brought in contact and who make up the circle of one's friends and acquaintances. Nor am I discussing those instinctive grudges women have against men (with which I deal in the next chapter)—grudges which, in the nature of things, have no precise male counterpart, although it is doubtless true that at times the one set of emotions reinforces the other and even blends with it; just as it is doubtless true that the special grievances men have against women are remembered more vividly on such occasions. No. Here I am speaking of a thing common to men and women, a mysterious antagonism buried in the nucleus of a recognized affinity: in short, an impulse of sex which, in its surprising manifestations, may baffle those very people who believe that their knowledge of sex is at once subtle and deep.

As this is a book about women, it may seem out of line to write a chapter devoted almost as much to men as to women, but I feel that one could not, with any attempt at fairness, treat the matter from the woman angle alone, any more than one could so treat the subject of infatuation, because it is pervasive throughout all sex, while I also feel that it *must* be treated here if one is to understand something about sex which is essential to our finer understanding of women.

In the usual way it is, I readily agree, easy to exaggerate the significance of the subject, for, in given instances, one may jog along all unaware of its presence. At least, not consciously aware, because the average person is looking for it so little that though glimpses of it do crop up, the true explanation may, assuredly, be totally missed. This really is so. And yet ignorance of its existence may have devastating effects. One has to walk with much care: that unexpected antagonism can blaze out of a calm sky without a second's notice. And as with all repressed emotions, its violence matches its suddenness. An alarming, incomprehensible aspect of character is revealed and the very earth seems to lose its solidity beneath one's feet.

I am not here concerned with abnormal sex psychology, which calls for expert technical handling and is, in any case, outside the scope of this work. But apart from the fact that among men and women there is probably a persistent, small percentage of real abnormals—due, I imagine, to some error in the atomic structure of the human frame or to very early, if not pre-natal, influences beyond precise investigation—I wonder how many members of either sex develop a sort of sex antagonism through their ignorance of the whole scope of normal sex driving them to despair? Through fear or loathing, nervousness can create its own simulacra, and who knows what reactions may not result from obstreperous exhibitions of the sexual instinct? Questions of this type can never receive exact answers, but there is little doubt that many people have gone queerly astray in their emotional life merely through an extension of that sex aversion which anybody—take Hamlet, as an instance—may experience in certain eventualities.

For the truth is, that however much we may enjoy sex on the physical, emotional and intellectual levels, we do resent from time to time its clamorous and senseless demands upon us, as a drunkard in his sober hours resents the clamorous demands of the liquor for which he craves. In exalting sex and idealizing love, whose bliss is so infinitely briefer than its pangs, civilization has thrown a burden on us which, though we perceive its implications, we welcome with such gladness that we spend half our

lives, much of our money, and a large share of our energy in encouraging its impositions. But putting one thing against another, an animal, with its unstudied reflexes, is probably happier in the long run—and we know it. I am no believer in those old people, such as Tolstoy (ironically enough the creator, in his prime, of a Natasha and an Anna), who rave against romance because they have outlived it, but I must confess that sorrow and desolation are a usual result. And yet, like other people, I want to be neither heedless nor decrepit.

Sex is a tyranny, and men and women are its victims and so each others' victims; but they would not escape from its toils if you offered them the peace of Nirvana. Not they! But this does not imply that they do not sometimes revolt against it in their minds and, in revolting, feel a sort of annoyance against the other sex—the sex which causes them such disturbance. It is usually a minor revolt, for our dreams of felicity are boundless and we always hope that the pleasure will outweigh the pain and because, in any event, most of us are wise enough to accept life as it is constituted. But inherently, through the differences that underlie every phase of sex and help to build up the total picture, a germ of opposition does exist in the mental, as in the physical, approach. And if occasionally the physical revolt comes to a head in some special object of revulsion, it is equally true that a person may develop a lasting dislike not of any individual in particular, but of sex as sex. One meets examples of this.

In evolving the spiritual from the physical, mankind has made an effort to harmonize a relationship which is innately full of discords; and the ability of lovers to find a new dimension in life is only one more step forward on the road of delusion. But the magnet which draws men and women together is an unstable magnet, and sometimes it reverses the process. Now and then, as I have pointed out, it does not even begin to work as it should, but for one example of that there are thousands in which it begins by attracting and ends up by repelling. We are always mixing up the temporary with the lasting, and when Churton Collins wrote, in his *Aphorisms*, "What

attracts us to a woman rarely binds us to her," he was stating a fact, the truth of which is apparent only in retrospect.

A man has to learn by experience that in every woman's mental make-up there are sensitized areas which he cannot touch with impunity. Books will not teach him this, because, though it is a universal truth, the personality gives little or no forewarning. Whether our appeal be realistic or romantic, we feel that it will be accepted or declined on the basis of individual choice. In brief, though we may own that love is very irrational, we rationalize our attitude towards it and explain away the oddest divergencies from the usual by easy generalizations about the fantastic nature of women. But this latent sex antagonism of theirs—and men's is much the same—which may seem so non-existent even to themselves that the only visible thing is their femininity, is nevertheless an integral part of their being, to be held at bay by a perpetual balancing of the emotional faculties.

Indeed, even the loyalest partnerships betwixt men and women, close and comforting as they are, hide in their recesses an inner silence upon which neither partner dares to intrude. For it is there that dwells the drowsing antagonism that, at all costs, must not be disturbed. Both try to forget its reality, which perhaps they do not even allow themselves to acknowledge, by the constant exercise of that affectionate unselfishness which binds them together and brings concord to their days. But, just because they are men and women, the antagonism exists; and just because they are human, and therefore faulty, it sometimes stirs in its sleep. And yet, maybe, without plumbing its exact significance, its presence adds a tenderness to their dealings with one another and a pride in their sense of mastering a situation.

But these are the nobler marriages. In numberless others the antagonism asserts itself year by year until finally there is no attraction left. Such marriages may continue for various reasons, but a spirit of discontent and unrest rules the household, and sex, which is a kittle jade, plays another of its heartless, incalculable games. The persons concerned are frequently bewildered at what has happened, but it is not really very obscure. The antagonistic instincts, abeyant during the dominance of the captivating in-

instincts, have come to the top, perhaps because, in their ignorance, the couple were taken unawares. Of course, there may be other explanations, but it is often unnecessary to look farther. The arid faithfulness of many a husband and wife has no excited longings outside the home; their dreary unhappiness has stifled all inclination for beauty or adventure.

This is not a very cheering topic, but I would emphasize again that though it is, I think, of some importance, its importance can be over-stressed. It is no good blinking the fact that sex antagonism is allied to sex attraction, but most of us get through life fairly well—perhaps life is not worth more—and that is as much as we can sensibly hope for.

CHAPTER XI

INHERENT RESENTMENT

MOST explanations of human conduct do not really touch the nerve of the matter, because they are only the result of external observation and not of basic knowledge. Behind the explanations that spring to the eye there are usually other explanations of a deeper and more imponderable kind, which, percolating, as it were, through personality itself, are liable to elude detection.

This, it seems to me, is particularly true of men's judgments on women. Many of their *obiter dicta* are no more sagacious than saying that a locomotive runs because of the steam—an accurate remark in itself, but not one which explains why steam makes it run. It is easy to define the mental differences between men and women by laying it all on sex, but that does not illumine the emotional workings of sex or give one any insight into a woman's mind.

How many men, for instance, perceive the enormous, voiceless resentment that a woman can feel against men simply as men? Very few, I take it, otherwise they would not make such glib generalizations to account for what is almost unaccountable. The dim, strange moods are airily allowed for by her femininity and her spells of unreasonableness put down solely to her lack of logic. But all that is merely surface interpretation of phenomena.

The truth is that women resent the fact that Nature has given men a fairer deal than it has given them, and that this resentment can assume the oddest forms. Indeed, even the most sensible of women, suddenly made aware of their powerlessness in the hands of fate, are apt to conceive a momentary hatred of all men. They know that their physiology tends to react nervously upon their temperament, and in despising their own weakness they feel anger against men, who, through the mere chance of being men, are the unwitting cause of women's instability.

In short, they are up in arms against the injustice of life, which has granted men a type of freedom they can never possess, which has made them the slaves of their bodies in a way man cannot imagine, which has ordained that their youth shall vanish while men of their own generation are still in their prime. And the very fact that men are courteous to women and bow to their wishes only accentuates their indignation, as though it were the gesture of a loftiness which could afford to be magnanimous.

I do not say that this resentment is consciously an abiding one in most women—it is not—but I do say that it is subconsciously at work in all women perpetually, and consciously at work in all women spasmodically. Even young and handsome girls, who are the mistresses of their future and who revel in their sex, often remind the youths whom they domineer that life has given them a raw deal; while older women are constantly informing men, who may be more elderly than themselves, how much they, the men, have to be thankful for.

And, of course, this is fundamentally true. I have never met a man who wanted to be a girl, but I have met plenty of girls who wanted to be men. Indeed, one of the greatest compliments a woman can pay a man with whom she is in love—she knows it well and sometimes, I surmise, uses it to flatter—is to say to him: “I’m glad at last that I was born a girl and not a boy.” Assuredly, the average man does have a better time than the average woman, and this is not only a woman’s point of view, it is also a man’s. Perhaps, building upon the skeleton of the words, it can all be summed up in Charles Kingsley’s line from *The Three Fishers*: “For men must work, and women must weep.” For work signifies the creative energy and active joy of existence, whereas weeping signifies a negative, despondent attitude of sorrow and uselessness. Even in war it is probably easier to fight than to wait, and many a happy warrior has a doleful wife.

I am not pretending, naturally, that the majority of women, or anything like it, would change places with men; I am only asserting that numbers would do so, and gladly. People have an inveterate capacity for fashioning their own compensations, and women are able to convince themselves that their characters,

their approach to life, are subtler and nobler than those of men. But this does not imply a pleased acquiescence with their lot. Rather, in the militant contempt for men which sometimes overtakes neglected females, drenching their every thought in vitriol, does it imply that, despite their handicap, they still remain superior.

And this same rooted resentment may account for all sorts of things which, at first glance, do not seem to have anything to do with it. If, as one may assume, it has created a kind of inferiority complex, that, I would suggest, helps to explain much in the conduct of women which may appear to a man exaggerated or irrelevant. People with an inferiority complex (a term so loosely applied nowadays that its true meaning has grown blurred) are for ever trying to assert themselves and to prove by a sort of belligerency that they are not at all what you think they are. They forget, however, that such symptoms give them away, just as a stubborn person who wants to be thought strong forgets that to be stubborn about the wrong things is a sign of weakness.

It is evident that no explanation, however broad or however delicate, can cover the obscurities of a woman's conduct, and that every time one tries to dogmatize one is sure to miss something. But it does occur to me that woman's sense of innate emotional irresponsibility may to some extent account for her occasional need to scold and disparage. If Nature has done her a bad turn by making her a woman, she will get level with Nature by getting level with man.

Such an argument, I admit, cannot be proved one way or the other where sheer instinct is in question, but I think it *can* be proved—in so far as "proof" is ever really proof—in those cases where instinct has become self-conscious. Surely it is obvious that when a woman's resentment against men flares up, she has deliberately, though not necessarily with that sort of deliberation which indicates open eyes, set out to conquer her inferiority complex by showing, to her own satisfaction, that it does not exist. In other words, she overcomes it, as she believes, by riding roughshod over some man. She is resolved that the disabilities of her

sex shall be turned to good account and that man, in his pride, must have a fall.

It is the same emotion, I think, which makes a certain type of woman so virulent in her feminism. Consciously she may be actuated by a sense of social, economic or political injustice, but far down, I suspect, her grievance is aimed at nature. One may argue that women reformers are contemptuous of sex differences because men have so long taken advantage of them, but I dare say a more correct reason is that to them sex differences and all they infer are so basically unfair to women just because they are so basically real that they *have* to be treated with contempt if women are to obtain the rights which are philosophically theirs. A shrill, rather than a reasoned, cry of injustice often underlies a woman's demands, and she will insist—contrary, maybe, to the still, small voice within her—that sex has nothing to do with any problem where complete equality is concerned. Indeed, many women, in their indignation against sex as a factor which weighs even when sex itself is not directly involved, will go to almost any length to deny its significance.

A resentment which, though seldom actually personal, is frequently exhibited in pungent personalities is very difficult to follow and very difficult to counter. How is one to guess that when a woman appears grumpy and disagreeable, saying bitingly sharp things for no particular reason, she may be addressing not the man with whom she is talking, but men in general? And suppose one does guess it, it is rather hard to keep one's answers on an impersonal note and remain cheerful in the face of affronts. But even though one be wise enough not to answer back, it does not always follow that one's forbearance will calm the storm. In fact, it may only act as a bellows, for nothing is more infuriating to a woman than to discover herself in the wrong, and to give her own case away is to enrage her all the more. But storms of that sort do allay themselves in due course, and the man who responds with good nature to irritability comes into his own later. For women are profoundly grateful for such glimpses of intuitive sympathy, and they have a lasting respect for those very qualities in men which they are loudest in denying to them.

However freely one may admit that women's grudge against life is justified, yet, because life *is* like that, there is something futile in nursing it. An unattractive girl may properly have her own personal grudge against life, but she can usually argue herself out of it by perceiving that it is merely her special misfortune and, aided by this perception, forcing herself to find an antidote ; but the kind of grudge all women have against life is universal and therefore irreconcilable. They are in a vicious circle ; the glory of their womanhood is tied up with its burdens and the penalty of their femininity lies heavy upon them.

It is not in the least astonishing that to even the most well-balanced woman a disgust of sex itself is common in recurrent moments. She does her best to disguise this, not alone because it is not in her interest to confess to it but because there is a hint of inner disloyalty in the thought ; but it is there, and all the more dangerously there, in that it is silent. Women are so completely in the clutches of sex, and men, who experience in the main only the pleasant side of it, are so importunate in one direction and so casual in another, that on occasion women would like to kick over the traces and scream.

And this, in its different disclosures, is true of all manner of women. An indignation, suppressed or slumbrous, lurks at the back of their heads and, actuated by an inherited aversion to the domination of sex, there are times when to every woman's jaundiced eyes men are little better than satyrs. Women suffer from endless neuroses, and these neuroses are almost invariably traceable either to womanhood itself or to the ideas it engenders in a woman's mind. Deep in her heart a woman resents not only man's intermittent needs as opposed to her permanent load, but the ecstasy of the glow, the treacherous ecstasy, with which he beguiles her. Even when she is happy with a man she feels at a disadvantage, and in her most contented hours there is a strain of discontent.

Men think it very unfair that women, who claim equality, nevertheless generally make it plain that when they give themselves to a man they are giving everything and receiving nothing in return. Is not sex supposed to be reciprocal, and why is her

choosing of you a higher honour than your choosing of her? But, as a matter of fact, though logically a woman's attitude may be unsound, instinctively it is quite sound. The gratification may be mutual, but while a man floats off gaily, a woman's whole emotional life may be calamitously disturbed.

The more a woman gives, the more does she want to give, and her love feeds upon surrender. But in a man the tendency is the reverse, and occasionally he must escape into the world of men. That powerful American novelist, John Steinbeck, makes one of his poor-white women characters in *The Grapes of Wrath* express pertinently something like this when she observes: "Man, he lives in jerks. . . . Woman, it's all one flow, like a stream, little eddies, little waterfalls, but the stream, it goes right on."

Indeed, it is true to say that a woman can be more continuously immersed in a man than a man can ever be immersed in a woman. And yet, though intermittency is in the structure of his being, this fact is never quite forgiven. No woman feels as sure of a man as she knows he can be sure of her, and that is why she can be so dreadfully hurt by those tiny neglects or forgetfulnesses which in themselves may signify nothing at all. A woman takes the large things for granted; it is the small things on which her happiness is founded.

And she resents instinctively, as if it were a slight, her husband's outside interests. Oh, if only she could get him away from everybody entirely to herself! Life must centre in her; indeed, his real life should begin on the day on which he first met her. Many a marriage is early jeopardized by a man wanting to keep up with the friends of his bachelorhood and to chat of old times, for to a certain class of wife that spells a sort of treason. She would not say it aloud, but she is jealous of the mere fact that he was contented before he met her, and she cannot bear to think that between him and other people he knew formerly, even if they be men, there were confidences and jests and fellowship.

But, curiously enough, she does not object to his having been previously in love, provided she is not given too many details and provided the ladies are no longer on view. No mature woman believes that she is a mature man's first love, but what she probably

does believe, though she may not own to it until that second arrives when admission is an avowal of her bliss, is that none of the others really counted. A girl will beg a man who assures her that she is the only woman who has ever meant anything to him not to be a humbug, but in the act of doing so she will preen herself. The others may have been marvellous, but it is she whom he has chosen, she who has carried off the crown. Moreover, what is past is past and nothing is deader than dead love. Her vanity is appeased by her victory, her jealousy swallowed in her triumph; but very soon, perhaps, her ingrained feeling that men are not to be trusted may begin to gnaw at her, and then good-bye to her peace.

In such a phase a woman may deem of sinister importance what, in another phase, she may deem simple and right—the yielding herself, emotionally and physically, to the man she loves. Indeed, she may be tormented by a sense of outrage merely because she has visualized a condition that does not exist. For in women's mental approach to sex there is, in flashes, a feeling of horrible indignity, amounting almost to frenzy; and in every woman there exist pathological pitfalls against which she has to guard herself to retain her sanity. This alone is a subject for a chapter, but because it *is* pathological—although the pathological is only an extension of the normal—I will not enlarge upon it.

Women distrust and dislike men's romanticism and longing for adventure. It is true, needless to say, that many men are neither romantic nor adventurous, but it is no use telling that to a woman. She thinks they are, even if it does not show, and to her it suggests an escape from obligations. Women are always on the watch for signs of restlessness in their men, and always pessimistic about such signs. Men, being, in their opinion, congenitally flighty, do not take their task as husbands and fathers with sufficient seriousness, and it terrifies and offends women to feel that they have handed over their lives to those who cannot be relied on not to make asses of themselves. Few women fear that their husbands will let them down financially (though they are never as generous as they ought to be!), but many women feel completely sceptical as to their behaviour once they are out

of their sight. And that, of course, starts a train of bitter reflection. Why should men have this liberty, while we, who have done everything for them, have to stay sedately at home, maintaining the family reputation ?

A high-toned woman no doubt stifles such recriminatory musings, just as she stifles that pettiness which attacks everyone, men and women alike, from time to time ; but no woman can stifle entirely her sense of life's injustice. In the harmony of her surroundings and the happiness of her home she may subjugate it, but the grievance is there even though it be passive.

CHAPTER XII

· THE NATURE OF BEAUTY

As every artistic judgment boils down finally to individual taste, it may be questioned whether there really is such a thing as a science of æsthetics. But most people feel that their views have, at least, a positive value for themselves, although it is clear that the same sort of emotion can be aroused in different bosoms by things which are diametrically opposed to one another.

It is, for example, wholly impossible to give a comprehensive definition of beauty in women as its countless manifestations can evoke a myriad reactions, but for each of us there is an ideal of beauty which, like some undiscovered element in the scale (if there still be any), we know to exist even if we have never encountered it.

And by beauty I do not mean only the type of physical attraction which appeals to a specific male, though this in itself can call up entrancing vistas beyond the physical, but that total beauty which includes personality and charm and the obscure, exciting quality that, at its very core, is the sundering line between men and women and yet draws them for ever to one another. Put like this, it might be held that beauty is merely a disguise of sex, for when a man is in love he can read perfection into the commonplace; but my argument is that, however individual and possessive our perception of feminine beauty be, all men do have a theory of it which is not directly concerned with sexual appeal.

Of course, in one sense no man ever thought about a woman for a tenth of a second without sex entering into it, for sex is inextricably in the frame, but we must differentiate between what is inevitable and what is self-conscious. What I am trying to explain is that even the coarsest of men have an instinct about feminine beauty which, though they may never face it squarely, lies at the background of their thoughts. When one meets a thick-necked, earth-bound man with a heavy black moustache, the sort of man

who is materialism personified and who talks salaciously about the " nice little girlie " he met on his last business trip, it is difficult to credit that he too is an idealist ; but in a curiously voiceless manner he is. All men are, but most men try to drown the whisper. The coarse man may concentrate on the physical, the educated man may cultivate cynicism, but in their origin both are escapist attitudes.

Even the man who owns that he is an idealist is usually half-ashamed of his idealism. He tries to persuade himself that it is a form of fatuity, not alone because the word has been so much misused that it has assumed a ridiculous significance, but because, in any case, it seems like pursuing a *fata morgana*. And yet in his secret heart he pursues it, just as perhaps the coarse man and the cynic, in their respective ways, hope that one day luck will knock at their doors. Few of us are satisfied for long, for everybody craves for his own brand of beauty, that ultimate beauty which cannot be mistaken ; and in all of us there lurks the belief that if we were really to find it, it would somehow alter our lives, not necessarily in a directly emotional manner but as giving us freedom and simplicity.

The irritabilities and moods in which we indulge arise, as often as not, from a feeling of stultification and disappointment. We are missing something that would complete us and draw us out, and this brings a complexity into our existence which, in its turn, affects our tempers and our conduct. Everything appears to be a perpetual misfit, which is all the more maddening because we are sure that such a condition is not inevitable but only a stroke of chance.

Luckily we are so made that, in the surprisingly Shakespearean words of Lew Wallace, the American general and novelist, in *The Prince of India* : " Beauty is altogether in the eyes of the beholder." But this kind of beauty, this special harmony, fades with the fading of love, whereas our sense of ultimate beauty stays with us throughout the years. We are sustained by expectation, and even our disillusioning experiences and false steps never quite efface that expectation. Though we accept the relative with our lips, we have an abiding faith in universality.

Perhaps the truth is that each man is entitled to his own absolute, even where physical beauty alone is concerned, and that, on this plane, there can be no cosmic absolute whatsoever. Such a theory, I suppose, would make a hash of æsthetic values, but in practice that would not matter, as the only values which mean anything to most men are their own. Even so, it generally astonishes a man that people are so blind as not to admit that he is right. The ordinary man's absolute is *the* absolute.

And maybe it is all a dream. But if it is, does that invalidate it? There is a class of mental dream which may represent a profound intuitional truth. We cannot always prove what we believe, but faith has a creative power of its own and our sense of ideal beauty is never really vital until it begins to pulse with the life we give it. Many a man cherishes what he has never seen, and sometimes in actual dreams, where the subconscious builds its own dimensions and lays bare our hidden longings, ideal beauty takes shape before him, glowing, tender, and, even in its momentariness, immortal.

If one appreciates that in a man's drawn-out life there are often not more than a few hours of untrammelled felicity, that sort of felicity which, in its augmented discernment, appears to make him master of the world, then the meaning of immortality in momentariness is patent. For everything else is but a waiting in the marvellous remembrance of time standing still. And such moments are nearly always bound up with the recollection of a woman smiling at him in her triumphant beauty.

I admit that such moments are, in that case, necessarily bound up with love, but I contend that the beauty for which men hunger, being a reflection of their own idealism, means more to them in the end than the beauty which they find. It is just because one has such a conception of life's fullness that one is so haunted by a perception of life's emptiness.

Of course, many people are fairly happy and content, but as passionate love outsoars all that, conjuring up a new heaven and a new earth, so does beauty, in its uttermost revelation, yield us a fresh notion of the possible, even if it be beyond our reach. The fact is that every man, whether consciously or not, is convinced

that somewhere or other is his complementary female. For his yearnings are always based on the concrete, in that they are based on the hope of getting out of life all that life has to offer. That is to say, a feeling of accord which would solve every doubt and banish every anxiety.

If women only guessed that in the most brazen men there is an odd kind of humility and shyness they would understand better what now tends to annoy them—men's innate romanticism. Men are everlastingly looking for what they hardly ever discover, and even if they do discover it, it seldom happens that their sense of finality is reciprocated. But happiness, in its usual selfish connotation, is not our farthest reach, and when the bell sounds one must be ready to give richly without asking for return.

And when I say "give" I am not referring so much to overt action as to that inward acknowledgment which tells us not to be afraid. For many people are frightened by their own most treasured thoughts and nurse their hopes so long that they come to assume an almost esoteric significance. If their chance does arrive they dare not put all to the test of reality, even in their hearts, any more than a man who has been silent for twenty years dares to hear the sound of his own voice. Moreover, their vision means so much to them and they know their own inferiority so well that they cannot convince themselves that they deserve good fortune, and so, hesitating, let good fortune pass them by.

Every man, according to his personality, has, as I say, his own theory of beauty and his own mode of confronting the problem it awakens. But crude as these images and methods often are, the thing to remember is that every man *does* have them. Women are more or less aware of this, and perhaps that is why they are so adept at catching clues and so instinctively able to don a mask. The simulacrum of beauty is all about us, and in a state of emotional tension a man's judgment is liable to be sadly at sea. But failure, as I have remarked, does not destroy the gleam, and whether a man be timid or resolute, whether he shrink from his fate or boldly grasp it, he can only define beauty in his own terms.

I once read an extract from Victor Hugo—I have never suc-

ceeded in tracing the source—which reads, “It is God who made woman beautiful, it is the Devil who made her pretty,” and it strikes me as an admirably pithy remark. Hugo, of course, was a master of rhetorical antithesis, but when he managed to drive a point home, he drove it with a thud. There is that between feminine beauty and feminine prettiness which is not only different in degree but different in kind. The girl whose portrait | simpers on the lid of a chocolate box may arouse amorous inclinations, but a really beautiful woman thrills one like a revelation. To say that good and evil enter into the comparison is to strain it, but it is assuredly true that if prettiness suggests, beauty exalts.

All this may seem to nullify the quotation about beauty existing only in the beholder’s eyes, but one must remember that just as a plain girl is plain even to those who do not know her, so a beautiful woman is beautiful to everyone. Indeed, extreme beauty destroys envy, just as extreme fear, as Dostoevsky says, destroys spite, and in Victorian days, when a beautiful woman could achieve the fame of a *prima donna*, women as well as men craned their necks to stare enraptured at the reigning queens.

Great beauty always creates a sense of spiritual loveliness, although, to be frank, nothing can be more deceptive than the expression in the eyes of a woman whose beauty, striking in itself, falls short of grandeur. That glance of liquid grace, of depth within depth, may conceal a despairing emptiness, and a beautiful foolish woman is apt to be particularly boring because she is inclined to be extremely complacent. One must just treat her as a picture, bearing in mind that great beauty is not necessarily final beauty, the beauty of one’s ideal, but that it is such a joy in itself that it does not matter to the onlooker whether, like the elaborate courtesy of an Oriental, there is nothing behind it.

And yet it might be debated whether, by virtue of its nature, beauty, in the long run, does not cause more sorrow than happiness. A beautiful woman cannot give her heart to everyone, but how many give their hearts to her. All things have the defects of their qualities, and beauty, which spreads delight, also spreads dismay. It is somehow frightening in its sheer perfection, for one knows that, like everything else, it will pass and be for-

gotten. If, for the ordinarily beautiful woman, the thought, "To-day I am older than I have ever been," must be even more poignant than for the average woman, very great beauty, having its roots in character, stays with its possessor into old age. Only death can vanquish it. Unlike the run of mankind, such a woman need not spend her maturity planning compensations against decrepitude or pretending that, in some manner or other, she is an exception to the laws of time.

I shall make no attempt to describe what constitutes beauty, for every beautiful woman is unique, and, save in the most general terms, any such descriptions would be meaningless. There is always something imponderable about beauty, something beyond analysis—that something which binds everything together into a consummate whole. It is no use talking about blondes and brunettes, about exquisite complexions and peerless figures. These details can be left to the judges who select "Miss England" or "Miss America." The only thing one can talk about profitably is the effect, not the minutiae, of beauty. And the effect is produced not alone by the details, not alone even by the sum of the details, but by the life which flows through them and animates them. This is an obvious statement, but it appears to be frequently forgotten. After all, one does not derive pleasure from music through reading the score; one must hear it played. Similarly, no description of beauty stirs one; one must see the owner of the beauty.

I am not depreciating for an instant the sensual satisfaction of the pretty face and the trim ankle, or, in fact, any sensual satisfaction, for our various appetites have their due place and many of our gratifications are purely physical; but I am trying to go beyond them and delve into the very nature of beauty. Not beauty divorced from humanity, but beauty transfiguring humanity and transfigured by humanity. And though, in a way, one cannot dogmatize about this, I think one *can* assert that all great beauty is endowed with an air of serenity.

I mean very great beauty—that rare, rare beauty which is inevitably allied to intelligence and balance. In its blended perfection such beauty has an effortless poise which surrounds it

like a nimbus and can stifle at its source the breath of desire. It represents, as one might say, the essence of a really beautiful woman's total being, shining about her as a lantern shines in the dark. This may sound exaggerated, and yet I believe that, in retrospect, it is the serenity of supreme beauty which lingers in the memory as its matchless quality. The unruffled serenity, the inner calm, the dignity nothing can disturb. That is the apex.

-) Tranquillity is a wonderful gift, born in the heart and flowering in the face. Of course, it is possible to be tranquil without being beautiful; but great beauty is not haphazard in the accepted interpretation, it is a visible sign of nature's maturest success in the creation of a woman. Therefore its tranquillity is of a different order. One might assume that it is easy to be serene and tranquil when everybody is at one's feet; but surely it would be much easier to be arrogant and self-centred? What makes great beauty so enchanting is that, going beyond the physical while including it, it is great enough to be unspoilt, because, in its very greatness, it is inherently direct.

Affectation is a witness to the second-rate, and numbers of women who are beautiful to a point imagine that they add to their allurements by being coy or haughty. They are living up to their faces, which, again, are a reflection of their souls. Yes, if one observes them closely the sequence can be followed. General Grant said that every man (which naturally includes women) was responsible for his face after a certain age, and in so far as character is concerned it was a shrewd remark. The face of the vapid, vain woman gives her away just as clearly as does the face of the drug addict. It is all written there, written in letters of bronze, no matter how classic be the features.

But very great beauty, I reiterate, that beauty which is more than technically perfect and which can even convert what might be a minor blemish in another into a special loveliness, is invariably *complete*. There is no emptiness in that countenance because there is no littleness in that heart; indeed, there is always nobility in both, the true nobility which has its roots in integrity. Does one need to ask why men will search for such a woman all their days and not abandon the search even though it prove fruitless?

Well, these are some rather disconnected ideas on the subject of beauty. And if what I have written is concerned more with men's approach to beauty than with beauty itself, I can only answer that it is through men's eyes alone that feminine beauty attains its quenchless fascination.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ADORNMENT

IT has been said that the art of dressing is the oldest of all the arts, and certainly one would have to go back very far to the day when primitive woman first discovered that clothing was not merely a source of warmth but a means of attraction. It was then that modesty, with all its curious by-products, was born.

I imagine that to begin with it was defensive, rather than offensive, tactics which guided her. In nature the male is nearly always more resplendent than the female, and when awareness about their appearance dawned on women it may have occurred to them that only through dress could they, so to speak, hold their own with men. This is perhaps a far-fetched theory, seeing that, as regards beauty, women are an exception to the general rule; but, after all, that is only from the man's angle—the dull hen pheasant is doubtless considered comely by the prismatic cock—and, in any case, an instinct of inferiority, an instinct based on the usual drabness of females, may have urged them on.

And how do we know that, from *any* angle, primitive woman was not more repellent than primitive man? Fanciful recreations show them both to have been atrocious, but just as men's features have been refined in one direction throughout the ages; so have women's been refined in another. The two sexes, as if by their subconscious will, have tended from century to century to assume those external characteristics most appealing to the other, and the ideal woman of to-day may be the result of a sort of wish-fulfilment. In fact, if one examines Lely's portraits of Charles II's beauties, those coarse, fleshy females without an ounce of attraction to our eyes, one can hardly believe that chance alone has been at work even within recent historic times.

The strange thing is that as woman's looks improved, so also

did her passion for adornment. But, then, in the development of social taboos and civilized inhibitions not only has the competition grown keener, but women have become cognizant both of their strength and of their weakness. Hence the incessant striving to stand forth from the crowd and gain the double prize of a suitable mate and an assured position. And as her appearance is woman's most obvious asset, and dress can be made to enhance it both æsthetically and sensually, she has tended more and more to decorate herself elaborately, even if it be under the guise of an elaborate lack of clothing, so that, in rivalry with her sisters, she can carry all before her. Thus the self-protective origins of apparel have evolved into a weapon of offence, with painting the lily as the extra triumphant touch.

Sophistication has wrought many changes in our attitude towards life and muddled up countless clear-cut issues, but though feminine attire has undergone surprising metamorphoses in its inner intentions and outward forms, nevertheless the premeditated care given to it is constantly appealing to a wider circle. In our own era the introduction of short skirts and artificial silk stockings has made millions of young women proud of themselves in a new way, and though the world is fast sinking into bankruptcy, even the poorest of them, once restrictions are lifted, will never revert to the economy of their grandmothers. The exploitation of sex has come out into the open.

The manifestations of rivalry go far beyond the conscious, and if we say that women dress more to excite the envy of other women than to please men, that is surely bound up with an instinctive jealousy. And it may have very little to do with the intention or with the age of those concerned. But one must beware of simplifying the problem by too easy a generalization. Women know that other women appreciate the niceties of dress better than do men and therefore their vanity is more gratified by a woman's admiration than by a man's. For in a sense clothes are an aim in themselves as well as a means to an end. The mere beauty of materials and design is soothing to a woman.

A woman always wishes to look her best in public and, though she may be dressing to please one specific man, to be attractive to

all men and chic to all women. Moreover, she feels that if other men take favourable notice of her, she will be the more desired by the man she wants. Thus at one and the same moment she may be out to arouse individual devotion, universal attention, feminine appreciation, and, in the process of doing so, to appease her self-esteem.

Women, it should be noted, are more interested in other women than men are interested in other men; and it gives, let us say, the shabbily-clad women of one class a definite pleasure to see the finely-gowned women of another. This is a case where the instinct of rivalry, which is the origin of their interest, merges into a dream-world wherein every woman is a princess. Observe—but shall we ever observe such sights again when all, being equally indigent, shall equally inherit, or not inherit, the earth?—the crowds of women who are invariably present to stare at the arriving guests at a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace or at the fashionable throng parading down Fifth Avenue on Easter Sunday. Their eyes are alight with enthusiasm, their comments openly laudatory. The poor, of course, have a voiceless irony of their own, but it is plain that their womenfolk are fascinated by the more fortunate members of their sex. But whoever, since those Regency days when the Duke of Somerset burst into tears at Beau Brummell's unfavourable criticism of his cravat, saw a man excited by the glossiness of another's top-hat or the faultless cut of his coat?

The enormous sums women spend on decking themselves out are a sign that men encourage feminine rivalry. After all, it flatters a man's conceit to know, or at any rate think, that it is for men collectively that all this money is being expended and it delights his gallantry to watch such charming pictures. Men jeer at women's slavery to fashion, but they would not have it otherwise. They are terribly piqued if their wives are dowdy, and though they may rail at the bills if their wives are smart, yet they would rather be out of pocket than out of countenance.

However content with her lot a woman may be, she likes to create excitement, not falling short of havoc if she can do it demurely, in the masculine bosom. It is a sort of witness to her

abiding power, a sort of triumph in the feminine contest. A thoroughly good wife often longs for admirers, and no woman can bear to be outshone. To be well-turned-out is part of her equipment in the race, and though she might be horrified at the thought of having a lover, she is not at all horrified at the thought that men might hanker after her as a mistress. There is something in Pope's dictum that all women are rakes at heart.

Though women hate being behind the mode, at the same time they want their clothes to express their individuality. Any man who has accompanied a woman to a hat shop must have come away dazed and prostrated at her incapacity to make up her mind between half-a-dozen hats which, to his eyes, are only insignificantly different from one another. But to a woman's view a thing such as a hat is either just right, and therefore satisfying, or just not right, and therefore totally wrong. It is no use trying to influence her, because if she finally buys what she does not want she will brood over it until she returns it or gives it away.

So the dualism goes on. She must be like all other women in one respect; she must be unlike them all in another. Indeed, this double yearning, which perhaps accounts for the infinite variety of women's clothes, is a godsend to thousands of people who make a living by supplying their wants, and if all women had to dress approximately alike, most women would in normal times stay permanently in bed.

The redundant use of cosmetics, so universal these days, may perhaps be regarded as one of those strange instances in which women's wish to please has outrun the constable. Men, as a rule, do not like pallid complexions, and many would agree with Napoleon's remark—I presume it is to be found in one of the innumerable volumes of contemporary memoirs, but I cannot put my finger on it—to a certain Court lady, "Go and put some rouge on, Madame; you look like a corpse," but neither do they like over-emphasis. Their idea is that cosmetics should imitate Nature, take Nature's place when she lags, but nobody can assert that scarlet lips and blood-red nails imitate anything but tribal marks.

And maybe this is not far off the point. Here, as in the wearing of jewellery and furs, women may be expressing a primitive need, which, because it is primitive, does not invariably march in step with the inclination of modern man. Of course, we soon accustom ourselves to anything, losing our sense of values in the process, and while we think it absurd of savage women to stick pins through their noses, we see nothing odd in civilized women sticking pins through their ears. Both are forms of adornment, both are overdoing what every man finds attractive.

But fashion is stronger than sense, and men have to put up with things which, if women but knew it, are liable to defeat their very purposes. The ultra-smart may be a barbaric reversion, and I am not sure that there is much to choose between a Negress who will spend every cent she has in trying to uncrinkle her hair and so look more like a white woman, and a white woman who will laboriously pluck out her eyebrows and so, whether she wishes it or not, look rather like a Mongolian.

Whatever accentuates the appeal of sex, whether it be innuendo or frankness, is sought after by women, and I do not deny that there are exotic types who are helped by an extravagant use of artifice. But not only are they in a great minority, but the appeal of that minority is about as limited as is the appeal of the fictional "vamp" lying curled up on a tiger skin. The average man either fights shy of them or treats them as a joke. Indeed, the ordinary girl, who is only following the current convention and not trying to exhibit the deeper tinges of her personality, is quite ready to laugh at her own titivations; though if one were to suggest to her that constantly "making up" in public is on a par with a man constantly picking his teeth in sight of everyone, she might not be gratified. Yet the nose lies very near the mouth. Anyhow, it is a small matter, and women are somehow able to retain an illusion of reticence and fastidiousness in all circumstances. Let them follow their bent.

Another phase of the psychology of adornment arises from Narcissism. Some women take an almost voluptuous pleasure in the contemplation of their own bodies, and they need exquisite perfumes and clothes to show off to supreme advantage their rare

perfection. I dare say that, in one form or another, Narcissism is fairly common in both sexes, and if the body be worth it (though it usually is not), it may compensate for lack of intelligence. But I cannot help thinking that these consciously lovely women are slightly off their balance. They will enter a room full of people not only as if they were worthy of admiration, but as if admiration was theirs by right. It is rather irritating to watch such a female, and the recognized beauty often misses the mark because, in her preoccupation with herself, she overlooks the fact that men dislike obvious egocentricity in a woman.

Then, of course, there is the soured type of spinster who despises clothes because they have never got her anywhere, and the masculine type of woman whose satisfaction comes from apeing men and who wears high collars and stiff jackets. They are both, in their varying degrees, pathological types, and need scarcely detain us here. Dress for them may be called a symbol of defeat.

There is one aspect of adornment which is frequently forgotten, and that is the spiritual comfort it brings to women who are dissatisfied with life or are getting on in years. Many a girl who has had a disappointment in love or who feels lonely will go out and purchase some nice clothes just to give herself moral support. Possibly it is the same kind of instinct which makes a man go out and buy himself a bottle of whisky. It is a sort of anodyne, a sort of gesture of defiance. Looking at herself in a new coat, examining it from every angle, may give a girl a negative satisfaction when her pride has been wounded.

And in the case of a woman who has reached that age when she feels she is no longer particularly attractive to men, the buying of clothes, the keeping herself smart and in good fettle, are a real protection against the melancholy of the middle years. It is a great mistake to assume, as so many people do, that it is merely women's inherent vanity which causes them to pay particular attention to their dress when the ostensible reasons for such care are no longer active. It is not vanity so much as self-respect. What they are doing is maintaining a stiff upper lip and not allowing life to get them down.

I am not, of course, referring to the type of foolish woman who

tries to defeat time by dressing as if she were a girl and making her daughter of seventeen dress as if she were a child. That, indeed, is a very different type. The passage of the years can be smoothed so blandly that it seems delayed, but there is something repugnant about the woman who will *not* face facts and whose youthful costumes and jaunty air are in gruesome contrast to the crow's-feet at the corners of her eyes, the tell-tale wrinkles round her neck, and the weariness of her expression. Growing old gracefully comes from a mental attitude of acceptance, and it is then that the woman who understands dressing really scores.

For it is extraordinary how many women, even though they be young and rich, are completely without taste. Sometimes it is simply not in them, strive as they may; sometimes they have a keen enough sense of what becomes them, but dare not exercise it lest they be accused of being too decorative or too severe—in short, too personal. Fashions, being arbitrary, are not for everyone; but the new is usually confounded with the elegant, and only the very best dressers, the women to whom dressing is an art and not a slavery, know how to blend style to their requirements.

The average woman, as the average man, is unimaginative and not given to self-analysis. Save in those heightened moments when she yearns to please because she is in love, and so yearning, gloriously excels herself, she dresses on the simple principle of "This is smart" or "This is cheap," and leaves it at that. Or perhaps merely through the meaningless feminine instinct to like clothes as a man likes a pipe. People's motives get obscured by routine and their personalities shrouded by their environment. In their appearance, as in their thoughts, most women follow vaguely in the wake and are incapable of expressing either themselves or any original ideas. For such women clothes are just a badge of womanhood and lose almost all significance.

Naturally, also, there is the class which holds that clothes *have* no significance. At least, their appearance suggests that this is what they hold. They are frowsy of set purpose, or even "arty," which is worse, and though they may feel a Dionysian madness on reading Keats and may long to dance with fauns, the only sort of dancing they ever do indulge in—and that from a kind of

moral standpoint—is Morris dancing, and their only partners are bearded enthusiasts in spectacles and grey flannel trousers. Their conscious intelligence, for what it is worth, has swallowed their native wisdom.

And then there is the nitwit type of woman who is dressy in public, often flamboyantly so, but untidy in the home. Such women abandon the fight through laziness of mind and body or through a silly notion that, having caught their man, they can afford to lie back and take things easy. But slatternliness, shortsighted in itself and shrivelling romance at its very source, also exhibits an unaccountable lack of femininity. As the forgotten poet Young feebly but accurately declaimed in *Love of Fame* :—

Women were made to give our eyes delight ;
A female sloven is an odious sight.

Not only can no woman afford to relax in regard to her appearance, but no real woman, unless so harassed by care that nothing of this sort matters any longer, wants to relax, save in a bath. If she were isolated on a desert island she would still keep herself neat ; and she would do so for a reason different from the reason which induces a man, living alone in Central Africa, to change every night for dinner. The man holds to the formalities in order to guard against disintegration, the woman because disintegration of such a nature is unthinkable.

Here, then, are some brief notes on a subject which might be boundlessly expanded. There is no finality to the method of approach, and every mentioned idea might make the nucleus of a chapter. If Carlyle could devote a whole book to the philosophy of clothes, what can be expected from a few pages !

CHAPTER XIV

THE PROBLEM OF MODESTY

OF all the qualities that we regard as particularly feminine, modesty is probably the one about which there has been most misunderstanding. From the earliest days until the era of Tennyson English poetry gushed forth in panegyrics on female modesty, and if one's only knowledge of women were derived from verse, one might really think they were as humble as those shrinking flowers with which poets have loved to compare them. Listen to Goldsmith (*The Deserted Village*) on the subject; his is a typical voice :— .

Her modest looks the cottage might adorn,
Sweet as the primrose peeps beneath the thorn.

It was men, with, no doubt, the connivance of women when they saw what men wanted, who invented this fiction of an insipid and bloodless purity as woman's noblest crown. For most men, even to-day, like to regard women's modesty as something peculiarly feminine in the romantic sense, something which can be melted only by the call of adoration; whereas most women, if they meditate about it at all, are more apt to regard it as a kind of protection and yet, at the same time, as a kind of lure.

I say "if they meditate about it," because as soon as people begin to study their conduct, they find logical reasons for it. But I do not think that the majority of women do meditate much about it, and therefore I do not think that their behaviour in this respect is primarily due to calculation. Of course all conduct originates in intention, but this does not imply that the intention is a schemed one. It may be an entirely consistent expression of the personality or the sex.

This, in the main, is true of feminine modesty. It never resembled the poets' vision, but, however modified by self-

consciousness, an instinct of modesty is a component part of woman's inheritance. It is not "modesty," as we interpret the word; it is something much more intangible. Numerous women, I admit, do habitually use it as a trap; others, according to the age in which they flourish, do possess a Desdemona-like modesty. But the first is founded on instinct, and the second is not altogether what men believe it to be.

External manners change with the changing centuries and I suppose that a few hundred years ago women did actually regard their husbands as lords and masters; but the nature of women does not change, and a modest demeanour, then as now, was, if the phrase be clear, much more feminine than meek. Women were expected to behave in a certain way—Victorian modesty at least was, as Laurence Housman says, a form of exhibitionism—and so they behaved in it not merely because of this expectation, but because it suited their purpose. And the poets wrote as they did, not only out of ignorance, but because it suited *their* purpose. On a substratum of truth everybody constructed an illusion.

A grown woman to-day, though conducting herself with that discretion which is essential to her welfare, does not hide her head and keep silence; but modesty, in the old-fashioned meaning of the word, is still considered appropriate to virginal girlhood, and young women, both through their intuitions and their upbringing, are taught to be unassuming in public. This is a pleasant feature, but it is not free of inherited guile. Their task, whether they know it or not, is to attract without putting themselves forward, and many a retiring girl has a secret faith in her star which it would surprise and alarm young men to discover. Her personality blossoms in repose and her innermost communings are not represented by her ingenuous eyes and quiet voice.

This, like most general statements, may seem excessive, but the simplicity of youth abounds in dreams, and the modest charm we admire so much in a girl is one of nature's cunningest devices. If it were a pose it would be nothing; but just because it is not a pose it is enchanting. Yet beneath that surface, which is an authentic part of herself as a female, there *may* lurk a ravening wolf. It is not probable, but it is possible; one never knows with

sex. Girls may be exactly what they appear to be or they may be exactly the opposite. But my contention is that they are all armed with the thing we call, for lack of a better word, modesty, and that this modesty has nothing necessarily to do with shyness, timidity, morality, or indeed any of the qualities to which we liken it. No, it is something unique, something deluding both to those who think women are all gold and those who think they are all tinsel.

Men are altogether too romantic about women, and women, who are quite well aware of this, encourage them in their mistake. For women are not romantic about men, though where individual men are concerned they can utterly lose their heads. And so the girl entering on life waits in expectation for her unknown lover, while holding all men at bay and yet all attracted by the guarded, charming circumspection of her bearing. Her modesty, shot through by gleams of her individuality, tantalizes and invites, and in men's thoughts the very fact that she is a woman—so obvious a thing can appear so strange!—creates a sort of detective interest in the unveiling of feminine traits.

Indeed, this is an interest which never lapses, and even elderly men are fascinated by the mental differences between themselves and women. And that curious aura of seeming modesty which, in its outward manner, no woman ever entirely loses, is absorbing to a man, partly because it is so feminine and partly because he is for ever wondering just how deep it goes.

Men and women are always pondering about one another and experimenting with one another. Casual conversations may have the acuteness of probes and people are ceaselessly trying to build up pictures which are invariably unfinished. Of course, if everything were explained, everything would lose its zest, but that does not prevent people wanting to have everything explained. Women are men's eternally unscalable Mount Everest.

The air of modesty with which women surround themselves creates a sense of genuineness and integrity, and that, I fancy, is one of the reasons why men are so bewildered and indignant in face of women's fickleness. I am sure that, in reality, women are

no more fickle than men, for fickleness is only a symptom of the polygamous urge, and most men and women have leanings in that direction; but I am equally sure that any example of such fickleness surprises men more than it surprises women. A man is always outraged to the point of incredulity at a woman's fickleness; while a woman, though she may be just as much hurt at a man's fickleness, is not usually over-astonished. To some extent this is due to her realism on the one hand and his egotism on the other, but that is not all. It is true that men do find it very hard to believe that they are no longer in the picture, but it is also true that, up to the last, they derive a definite sense of safety from a woman's modest deportment. And it must be remembered that though a man cannot help showing his shifts of feeling, a woman, under her mask, can conceal hers much more effectively. Assuredly, if a man is in love, he can tell; but where his vanity is being flattered it may fall on him like a blow.

All this is rather ironical, because if you were to compile an anthology on women one of the chief headings would be devoted to praise of her modesty and another to diatribes against her fickleness. Both things, in my opinion, are exaggerated, because writers throughout the ages—who, naturally, are men for the most part—have failed to perceive that the first is not a virtue and the second is not a vice.

Again, women have to be very cautious as to men's expressed admiration, and they have learnt how to wear the cap of modesty so non-committally as to appear positively stupid. They wear it either to ward off undesirables or to give themselves time. Modesty can defeat innuendo just as readily as it can defeat impropriety, and a woman can achieve her aim while putting herself calmly in the right. Her position as the one who is theoretically approached gives her an enormous advantage, more especially as she can, when she wants, make her wishes known without in the least undermining her prestige.

Although women understand one another with a clarity men cannot approach, yet there are aspects of a woman's life which men alone understand. This is as obvious to women as it is to men; but all the same, despite their own experiences, women

cannot quite credit the behaviour of other women in similar circumstances. Woman's modesty is to them a sort of creed, and, though they may be awake to the fact that their own physical modesty is partly a varnish, they cannot altogether believe that vast numbers of other women have made just such a discovery. To every woman, passion in its extreme revelations is an exceptional experience, as if fate had carried her, alone of females, into an uncharted sea; and therefore, while pitying women who have not, as she conjectures, had, or been capable of having, such experiences, she also wonders in her off-moments whether she should have behaved with more moderation. It is, as one might put it, a reversion to her primary code.

But these, I emphasize, are only after-reflections. From the conventional standpoint woman's modesty in sex relations is, in my judgment, no greater than man's, and probably less. Once a woman has made up her mind to that relationship she is more direct about it than a man. The decision come to, the value of modesty has vanished and her one idea is to put forth all her fascination. Often, in her abrupt *volte-face*, she under-estimates an odd modest strain in even the most voluptuous of men or forgets that a certain kind of reserve, a reserve imposed only to be relinquished, is more appealing to a man than immediate submission. In the dawning sincerity of the moment she brushes aside, with a gesture of contempt, every vestige of the flirt, and with it the flirt's latent or acquired skill in suggestiveness. If she is going to surrender herself the surrender must be total, for therein lies its justification. Women never do the elemental things by halves, and they get so carried away by the joy of giving that they become wholly indifferent as to consequences. Beyond a point they do not even try to protect themselves, although their practice hitherto may have been based on the principle of self-protection. They are not ignorant of this, but because passion deeply changes their approach to existence, summoning to their aid or their destruction emotions of a force about which no speculative knowledge could have forewarned them, their wisdom is often not only useless but despised. As an obscure Italian dramatist, Sografi, puts it in his play, *Olivo e Pasquale*: "Maidenly

modesty is like *aqua vitæ*, which keeps in perfect condition as long as it is tightly stoppered, but, if the air gets to it, evaporates at once."

Personally I consider that modesty, as applied to sex, is more or less meaningless and that people are aware of it only if they feel uncomfortable. It is clear that in itself sex is neither modest nor immodest, but the Christian religion has cast the glamour of sin upon it and the puritan in so many of us is perpetually at work trying to explain away what is entirely normal. The only result is to produce an unhealthy atmosphere and to keep modesty in the foreground when modesty has nothing to do with the matter. In this respect, women in their acts are often more apparently honest than in their words.

Nevertheless, men rather like the contradiction. They want women to be frank in their deeds, but not in their speech; they wish them to be demure but without shame, at one and the same instant. And this is not simply to increase their sensual reactions, although that does play a part. For what men value particularly about a woman's modesty—I mean that modesty which is part of her womanhood—is a kind of fastidiousness even in abandon, a kind of candid, natural acceptance, free of coyness or subterfuge. A single false move can ruin an association of this type, and men admire the negative modesty, if one may so term it, with which women can transform a potentially embarrassing into an actually delightful relationship.

It may be argued that "modesty" is the wrong word to use in such a place and that the error is not corrected by setting "negative" in front of it; but all general words assume specific inflections according to the context and I think that "modesty" is probably a more accurate word to employ here than "tact." For tact is, in essence, a self-conscious gift, whereas modesty, in its best meaning, is instinctive and therefore relatively unerring. But perhaps in their highest range the one includes the other. Ideas often fuse.

Our ordinary notion of feminine modesty has something slightly prurient about it—as the joke goes, To the pure all things are impure—but in reality it is a quality which cannot be finally

dissected. It is part of a woman's femininity, just as boldness is part of a man's masculinity. The proper thing is to lift them both out of the moral sphere, where they do not belong save through an erroneous association of thoughts, and study them in their correct light as genuine emanations of sex.

Words are treacherous things in that, owing to the niceties of the mind, they are subject to individual interpretation; but we must try so to train our musings that they reach down to fundamentals. It is very easy to jeer at women's modesty and it is rather the habit to do so these days, but that is because men and women are too fond of rationalizing everything. The swing of the pendulum not only affects the reputation of persons, but the reputation of the sexes in various directions. Now that women have gained their freedom it is inevitable that feminine modesty, as sung by the poets, should appear rather ridiculous; but perhaps it was the poets who were rather ridiculous. They extolled something which, in the form it took, was an invention. But the modern cynics are no better. What they are doing is merely "debunking" the poets, not getting at the truth.

The truth is quite otherwise. Feminine modesty is neither a recoiling from life nor a toying with emotions. It is, rid of unwarranted connotations, a dignified acceptance of differences, in which, though self-preservation has a share, there is neither fear nor fraud. Its external manifestations alter, as almost everything alters, but it is rooted in femininity and therefore imperishable.

If one does not grasp this, one will soon be up against such formidable snags that there will be nothing left to hang on to. And that is probably why so many people insist that women's modesty is merely a kind of ruse, because some women work it for their own ends. It was an involved day for humanity when we became self-conscious about our instincts, for not alone has it complicated social life to an incredible degree, but it has hopelessly entangled individuals with themselves. How many of us are single-minded any longer or can accurately trace the reasons for our behaviour?

The secret sharer of our existence—conscience, if you prefer

the word, though it has too precise a significance for my taste—is always whispering in our ears that we are double-faced. Well, in a fashion it is true. What else could be expected from our active, sleepless senses, gazing, argus-eyed, in all directions at once? But one can carry the argument too far, carry it indeed to the pitch where every action, even the most self-sacrificing, appears as a form of self-indulgence. It is a mistake to conclude that because instincts have been deliberately exploited, the primal drive has undergone a change. In the case of feminine modesty, for example, what was guessed at, though usually misunderstood, throughout the ages is still true. Only, as I keep repeating, it is not “modesty,” as envisaged by men, it is a trait of femininity.

Men by nature have a strain both of the sentimentalist and of the tyrant. They call for modesty in women, but it must be the modesty *they* admire. And just as some people have an irritating trick of putting an argument into one’s mouth and then proceeding to demolish it, so some men are constantly telling women what the ideal woman is like, only to add in detail how far they fall short. Of course, women *do* fall short of men’s ideals: to begin with, no woman is perfect; but, more important, no woman resembles closely men’s ideal of women. Women’s modesty is not a man-made thing, it is a thing evolved by women because of men. Consequently it is not to be comprehended by male generalizations.

I dare say my exposition is not very enlightening and that all I have written has served to cloud, rather than clarify, the issue. But then the whole problem of women’s modesty has been so persistently overlaid by convenient, but fallacious, assumptions that not to take certain things about it for granted has the appearance of wilful wrong-headedness.

CHAPTER XV

THE BACKGROUND OF MOODS

THE rather silly remark about women being privileged to change their minds is only a polite way of saying that women *do* change their minds. And they change them because they are swayed by fluctuating little moods—the children, as it were, of their deeper moods—which they make practically no attempt to regulate. It is true that men encourage them in this by tacitly acknowledging that it is merely what is to be expected, but I suppose they long ago discovered that it was wisest to accept the inevitable with a good grace and that nothing was to be gained by trying to alter the fundamental nature of women.

But I am not sure that this acceptance has been beneficial to women's characters. We all, to our earnest regret, have to curb our instincts at times, instincts which might result in anti-social activities or be bad for us; but if somebody be sufficiently affable to cast a lenient eye on our weaknesses, we are only too likely to become lenient towards them ourselves. At the very root of women's souls there is, I opine, an inherent instability, but I hardly see why it should be taken for granted that they need put forth no effort to steady their nerves and act with more sense of responsibility.

However, one must remember that physiology plays a dominant part in directing women's outlook and that many of their unaccountable mental phases are due to forces over which they have no control. But even here, though one cannot over-stress the significance of these forces, one can, in my guess, over-stress their inevitable effect on conduct. A man with a sluggish liver is apt to snap at people, but if he be really determined to control himself he can. Of course, the comparison is not altogether just, for the toxic poisons which attack a woman are much more powerful and permeating, but she might to some extent—that is

to say, to a bigger extent than most women seriously envisage—endeavour to look at herself objectively and, so looking, behave in a more reasonable manner than she always does.

However, it is plain that with most women this is a counsel of perfection and that we must accept them for what they are—in some ways better than men, in some ways worse, and in either case delightfully and maddeningly different. We may quote the Spanish proverb which Cervantes put in the mouth of Sancho Panza in *Don Quixote*, "Between the yes and no of a woman I would not undertake to thrust the point of a pin," and we may nod agreement in doing so, but that need not prevent us from trying to arrive at some synthesis to cover her inconsistencies and her moods.

Allowing all that has to be allowed—and who can tell how much that is?—for physiology, I cannot help thinking that women's contrariness is, in part, an instinctive device to protect them against men's rush-tactics by giving them command of a weapon men are unable to parry successfully. Women know that, in all sorts of ways, men have them at a disadvantage, and therefore it is natural that their psychology should have developed safeguards founded on their weakness and not on their strength.

Women crave for certitude, but as men are constantly doing things which jar the delicate balance of their hope, finality too often eludes them. For I believe that just as the born polygamist is usually, at any given instant, an ardent monogamist, so the woman who is incapable of making up her mind is frequently the very type to whom certainty would spell bliss. Not finding content, she grows captious and carping. But it seldom strikes her that the fault may lie in herself—in other words, that she waits to be convinced instead of acting in such a manner as to be convincing.

All this dubiety, coupled with her instinct to keep men at arm's length—an instinct which seems to exist coincidentally with an exactly opposite instinct—is, I fear, responsible for many of her sudden moods and changes. She is like a minnow darting aimlessly about a pool, scared of its own shadow. Discontented with things as they are, she is for ever trying to reach out for things that have no reality.

Instincts are not an unqualified guide to conduct, and the woman who lets them rule her to the exclusion of probability, as numbers of women do in vital matters, ignores the fact that instincts can get out of hand and offer very shaky advice. Thus a woman who is trying to hold her own by behaving as a sensible woman should sometimes exhibits a petulant irrelevance instead of that calm mastery at which she aimed.

For women have the usual faults that men have, such as mulish tempers and peevish exhibitionism, and are moreover liable to display a peculiarly feminine tartness when nettled. Being highly-strung, they lose control of themselves rather easily, either in tears or railing, and show the worst side of their characters. Many men live in terror of their wives' dispositions, and there are certain types of women who, recognizing that they are semi-sacrosanct by custom, rejoice in scoring off their husbands by accentuating their moods. I am not saying that this is always, or even usually, a conscious attitude; I am only saying that women often fall back on their instincts when they would do better to use their judgments. Or more often, perhaps, they take one for the other, especially when they are tired out and, consequently, inclined to be querulous.

We must bear in mind, too, that women hate having to explain themselves, partly because it lowers their prestige, partly because they know that men regard things differently, and partly because they do not invariably understand their own actions. Thus they can throw a pall of mystery over conduct which may be due primarily to dissatisfaction. In brief, their waywardness is sometimes touchiness, and their fits of reserve the result of suppressed anger. And as they do not like admitting even to themselves that they are to blame, they can twist their own motives with such an air as to deceive everybody.

Quite a number of women, particularly young women, are complete egotists, in that they regard life solely as a gratification and people only as a means, direct or indirect, to their enjoyment. For such women, to veer hither and thither is just an expression of momentary whims, and it never enters their heads that, unless it suits their convenience, implied promises or obligations ought

to be honoured. They use their immunity from criticism as if it had an absolute value and they make a merit of their capriciousness.

Of course, the average woman is different from this, but in degree rather than in kind. She does not flaunt her temperament, but it is there for service if necessary, even though she be unaware of it, and one can never be sure when a woman will not, so to speak, fade out of one's world into her own. Hers is a world which has been invented by women as a refuge, and men cannot cross its invisible threshold. In that world woman's logic is the only logic and the blurred mass of her emotions assumes a crystal clarity. She can return from it refreshed and elated and without feeling any call to elucidate her wilfulness or her inconsequence.

There is undoubtedly in women a streak of peculiar feminine unscrupulousness which, if it sometimes drives them to heroic perjury on a man's account, is equally capable of acting against his interests. Women feel that, in the satisfying of their inner femininity, they have their own purpose in life which men do not appreciate, and that they can fulfil this purpose only by appearing to agree with men while secretly playing upon them. So, disarming them by their smiles and endearments, they take advantage of men's tolerance to attain their ends.

But all this, true enough though it be, is the more superficial half. Men too are often moody and changeable, but we must be careful to differentiate between symptoms and causes. And men also, as I have pointed out elsewhere, have their grudges against life, but they are not the same as women's grudges and therefore we can scarcely, with fairness, employ similar words to describe them. For instance, though we may hold that Sir Philip Sidney's line in *Arcadia*, "No is no negative in a woman's mouth," does delineate a certain typically feminine vacillation, it does not follow that we are entitled to criticize women adversely on that account. A woman's moods may seem fantastic to us, but to a woman they are often far more tragic than fantastic. They portray an involved unrest, a mute resentment, and many a woman who may annoy a man by what appears to him a perverse incapacity to face things

squarely, feels as if she were in a trap that is closing in on her from every side.

The whole problem of women's moods and of what goes on inside their racked brains is very obscure. How is one to get at the truth? Just when they are most in need of help women are least able to accept it; anything one may say or do is bound to touch a quivering chord. There are times when women yearn to be alone, because, caught in the snares of their sex and their environment, they feel utterly solitary. Those hysterical outbursts which appear so incomprehensible to men are the result of an inherently ill-balanced nervous system that can adjust itself to normal conditions only by the drastic freeing of accumulated tension. It is not only men whom women distrust; it is life itself.

And we must keep before us the fact that women regard men as beings of a coarser fibre than themselves. When they retire into those strange, voiceless soliloquies which enfold them like a shroud they are really fleeing the entanglements that existence, governed as it is by the density of men, has forced upon them. In a general, as in a personal, quarrel with men, women are always in the right!

Of course, women's temperaments vary enormously, some being serene and unruffled while others are compact of humours, some being as deliberately cheerful as others are constitutionally gloomy; but the minds of all of them are haunted at intervals by fears so intangible, although so real, that they know it would be useless to try to explain them to any man, however close. His clumsy efforts to cheer them up get them on the raw, and so their fears breed grudges, which men never suspect, because from a masculine viewpoint they are wholly unjustified. One mood sows the seeds of another, and the inner life of women, feeding on itself, grows more compressed and incalculable.

Indeed, many women harbour grievances against their nearest and dearest which, trivial perhaps when put into words, have a direful significance for them and may colour their thoughts night and day. They are not, as a rule, grievances of a kind to undermine their affection or their loyalty, but they *are* of a kind to leave a cankering sore and a perpetual bewilderment. When a woman

seems abstracted or aloof it is often the case that she is, as one might say, hugging her grievances and asking herself how she is to solve the insoluble and why it is that people treat her as they do.

A man, with reservations, believes in clearing the atmosphere by talking things out frankly; but a woman, though not averse from scenes of a kind, is less predisposed to take so direct a course. It is not so much that she would not wish to, as that she cannot bring herself to. She feels so strongly about what, to a man, might be paltry, and she has schooled herself so long to say "Yes" when she means "No," that she would not know where to begin or, indeed, where to end. The prospect is too difficult and too frightening; she can never lay down her burden save by drawing in upon herself.

In criticizing women one must, to a large extent, avoid such words as "right" and "wrong." The sensible husband does not attempt to argue his wife out of her moods by proving that they are uncalled-for; he lets her argue herself out of them. Those manifestations of femininity may be tiresome, but he perceives that their origins are beyond his ken and that to yield on unessentials is not to lack firmness, but to possess tact. To gain a logical victory over a perturbed wife would, with a vengeance, be a Pyrrhic victory and it is safer to avoid than to confute a moody woman.

For a nice woman, left to herself, will not go too far in unreason. A burst of mental extravagance brings her up sharp, and she is secretly afraid of alienating sympathy and being abandoned to her own devices. Respect for a husband survives concealed wrongs, and she still looks up to him as her ultimate support. And so she pulls herself together, and all is sunshine again until something or other happens to upset her equilibrium once more.

This is a very elementary way of describing how a woman vanquishes her moods, for much is dependent on the momentary condition and the unconscious workings of individual personality; but it gives, I think, a fairly accurate picture of the surface procedure in an average case.

The truth is, women often recognize that they are acting

foolishly, although they feel totally justified in so doing, as if there were a wisdom beyond folly. I cannot explain this anomaly except by emphasizing that female logic is not the logic of the schools. It is probably this knowledge of theirs about their actions, as much as anything, which makes it so futile to try to discuss their moods with them. For that, naturally, is infuriating and only leads to denials more noticeable for vehemence than for accuracy. And in fact, because moods are so much an element of her being, a woman is not always aware of their oncome and may find herself adopting a pessimistic view of the universe for no ostensible reason.

In the sincere rendering of the words, a woman's moods are a basic symptom of her womanhood and, in the last resort, outside dissection. That is the type of truth one is constantly coming up against when considering women, and I am unable to rid myself of the idea that, apart from the biological and psychological differences between the sexes, there may be yet another and a subtler difference which, where women are concerned, may be called the very essence of femininity. I mean something quite impalpable and yet all-pervasive, something that may account for certain effects which seem queerly outside the powers of the two admitted sex influences, the physical and the emotional. Not easy to illustrate; but just as in the Trinity there is a third member whose presence is felt by Christians but who remains inscrutable and esoteric, so perhaps it is with sex. I put forward the speculation for what it is worth, for I can neither expand it nor elucidate it. Indeed it may be the merest phantasy, a result of personal reactions, although when people are in love its spiritual breath does appear to be all around them.

However that may be, I am persuaded that there are feminine agitations which no fineness of insight or phrase will ever unveil. One can, for example, say all manner of things about women's moods, things either clever or stupid, but they are not the things a woman would say. She might eagerly agree with you as having come as near the truth as any man is likely to do, but she would still consider you rather purblind. For she has a range of feelings our common language hardly touches and an

angle of perception purely individual to her sex. But perhaps, in our relative ignorance, we may hazard the conjecture that in their origin her moods are, in one interpretation, an offshoot of her feminine anxieties. Vague terrors and uncertainties do indeed exercise an immense influence over a woman's life, and she is not to be appeased by the semblance of safety which her external circumstances may offer. She knows that appearances are deceptive and facts treacherous, and she dreads the chasm which, overnight, may open at her feet and imperil everything she cherishes.

And so despite the air of self-assurance many women present to the world, they seldom feel entirely secure. They cannot, as men can, contemplate existence as a rollicking adventure; they can only hope that things will turn out for the best. And even that best has an ambiguous sound. How can they help being sometimes moody?

CHAPTER XVI

FEMININE CLEVERNESS

BECAUSE women have such instinctive cleverness in getting their way and solving their problems, many men are inclined to minimize their actual cleverness and to deny them gifts they indubitably possess. Of course, it is not always easy, or even possible, to differentiate between instinctive and self-conscious intelligence, but I think there is a fallacious tendency to under-estimate women's brains in proportion as one overrates their femininity. That is to say, in certain directions. The man who dismisses them intellectually with the contemptuous exclamation, "Women!", is the very type of man who has an exaggerated idea of their native cunning.

Without elaborate forethought, a pretty woman knows just how to behave and dress so as to make herself attractive. But as soon as she abandons a passive rôle it is obvious that she has to use her mind as well as her inheritance, and that if she is to maintain her position and deal with the dilemmas inherent in it she must exercise a nimble wit and an alert psychology.

A clever man lets his cleverness show, but a clever woman conceals hers. It is not her game to ruffle a man's vanity, however much his pose of superiority may secretly make her fume; it is her game to steer him in the right direction. She does not want to shine as a man shines; she wants to achieve results. Provided she can do that, it is all the same to her whether the man thinks he is yielding to her charm, her weakness, or her female illogicality. Thus it often happens that a man, guided with delicate precision by the invisible reins in the hands of a woman, imagines himself to be the tolerant master of the situation, when in fact he is opposed by an acumen much keener than his own.

Expressed in black and white this is evident enough, but the truth is that more men do justice to feminine wiles than to feminine

cleverness. Naturally, in most instances a woman's particular brand of cleverness, as a man's particular brand of cleverness, is, in a sense, part of her sex, but it is also profoundly individual. One must remember that many clever women like to fool men into believing that their cleverness *is* purely a matter of intuitive femininity, for thereby they attain their ends without either offending men or making them stubborn.

And as a woman gains favour in a man's sight the more feminine she is—a vague term, admittedly, depending on the personalities involved—it happens that what he finds alluring in her may also plague him. An old Cornish peasant, who was contemplating a sixth marriage, said to a friend of mine, "Women is just as clever as men, and a good deal more sly and deceitful," and it is plain that this aged patriarch would never have considered so reckless a step unless he was really enchanted by his cynical discovery. To him undoubtedly the slyness and the deceit of women, which, I suspect, were the main features of their cleverness in his eyes, were simply an inevitable and delicious aspect of their womanhood.

Most men, however cultivated, tend, after their own manner, to argue rather as did the Cornish peasant. They might not admit this in conversation, for it is hardly polite to ignore women's mental processes altogether, but to themselves they explain the vagaries of their womenfolk by an eloquent shrug of the shoulders. To some extent, I dare say, they are right, but not to so large an extent as they fancy. Women have very cool, calculating heads, and they know exactly how to make use of their feminine privileges. Two men, let us say, fall in love with the same girl, and for a time each may reasonably consider that it is his suit which is prospering. But when she finally decides to take one or neither, she is not in the least disconcerted by the perplexities, on the part of a man, such a decision would create. Modesty, climbing back into the saddle, has never left the saddle, and words capable of only one interpretation have been entirely misunderstood! And all this is assumed so naturally and so simply that a man finds himself positively bereft of speech.

Indeed, there are few ways in which women manifest their cleverness more convincingly than in the calm evasion of the

unpleasant. Such acting comes, of course, easier to a woman than to a man, but still it does require an astonishing display of sheer adroitness. The pained or indignant glance which says, "I don't know what you're talking about," is a masterpiece of dissimulation, and that air of inviolability in which women can encase themselves at a second's notice is not brought to perfection without untiring practice.

Men are often flabbergasted, but women are seldom at a loss. The most embarrassing situation finds them unruffled, and where a man would flounder, a woman marches serenely on. Not being too sensitive about other people's feelings, she has little hesitation in taking an unfair advantage, and thus she can devote all her talents to the forwarding of her own plans or the saving of her own reputation. I do not mean by this that women must be unscrupulous to be clever, but merely that they have a code of their own and that they are quite ready to concentrate on one thing to the abandonment of other things.

A woman can squirm out of any predicament and if one tries to pin her down by the precisest of language she will answer with an agility that leaves no opening for reply. Her feminine nature and the position she has acquired by being a female help her to elude the consequence of her acts, not as if she were forgiven, but as if she were innocent; and this, of course, calls for a brilliant exhibition of personal dexterity. Unless their feelings are involved, women are not to be caught out; but when their feelings *are* involved, their cleverness sometimes becomes the slave of their emotions. They do not cease to be clever, they only cease to be self-centred. And so, forgetting the instinctive warnings of their femininity, they appeal to men's feelings, not as if they were far above men, but as if they were only their equals or perhaps even their inferiors.

But women's instinct of how to deal with men is not always sound—for example, the theory that a girl should never show a man that she cares for him until she is sure of his affections may often be right, but is often wrong—and they are too ready to account for their failures with men by blaming their own method of approach. In retrospect, they invariably regard frankness as

having been an error, but this is not necessarily true. The error frequently lies in their own character or in their reading of another's. A woman in love will make, of her own accord, promises to a man which, unless things go well, it is not in her power to fulfil. Such promises, though uttered sincerely, are only relative to her feelings at the time or to her limited perception of personality; but a man is apt to convince himself that they have a final value—it is a marvellous conviction, while it lasts, but perilous, in that it tempts him to be slack—and so, when he discovers that they are just like all other promises, his own included, to lose that very trust which, had it been sustained, might have led them both to the goal of their desire. It is not so much that her approach was faulty as that she over-estimated the depth of her devotion, her psychological insight, or the strength of her nerves.

The social cleverness of women is allied to a sort of supple audacity which enables them to ride roughshod over obstacles while appearing to glide along without an effort. They appreciate to a nicety just, so to speak, what the traffic will carry, and though this is partly instinctive, it is partly planned. By not advertising her cleverness a woman is able to exploit it: she can so slyly pull the levers when nobody is on the watch, she can so gracefully retire into her shell should the need arise.

Women have amazingly quick minds, just as they have photographic memories for details which they take in at a single glance, and, as they have also extremely practical minds, they can sum up possibilities at a glance. And they have a fathomless patience. Never be deceived by a woman's acceptance of defeat, for women are tenacious of their aims and well able to conceal them in a mist of tears and assurances. Or simply by saying nothing. Busy thoughts are teeming behind those dove-like orbs, and the man who thinks he has finally argued a woman out of some pet idea is making a mistake of the first water. When a woman is balked, she begins at once to devise a new attack.

Yet there are times when the cleverness of women, marked though it be, rather suggests something going round and round in a circle. It is so often concentrated on insignificant points and so frequently employed for purposes which lead nowhere that,

again, one may be reminded of a parrot in a cage. For years and years a parrot lives in its cage, sleeplessly vigilant, ready for any emergency, with a suspicious glitter in its beady eyes, but at the end of all those years it is still in the cage and has achieved nothing whatsoever.

I am not implying that women accomplish nothing by their cleverness; I am only implying that a good deal of it is wasted. They provide for eventualities which scarcely ever occur and prepare for dangers which are largely imaginary. Moreover, their studied schemes are liable, on occasion, to be far too comprehensive, and though they can often deceive men as to their real intentions, it is doubtful whether, in the long run, they profit much by doing so. Once a man begins to distrust a woman he loses interest in her involved mentality and does not care whether she is being crafty or not; her cleverness is of no value to her when the man on whom she is exercising it ceases to have faith in her. Women cannot fight rearguard actions; they must always be advancing or at least holding their own.

And as soon as a woman uses her cleverness destructively, to hurt a man instead of to influence him, then it is likely to turn against her. Her singular power of sneering invective may soothe her fury for the moment, but it kills that chivalry in a man on which she depends for security. He sees her suddenly with new eyes, and though he may have brought the outburst on himself, resentment begins to stir. For an upbraiding, unbridled tongue can sap the foundations like nothing else and after scenes of violent recrimination things are seldom quite the same.

Women possess, indeed, an unholy aptitude for invective and their cleverness seems to come to a point in the utterance of bitter and mordant gibes. If it needs only a few soft words to enchain a man's heart, when a woman wants to rid herself of a man she can hardly breathe for the flood of abuse that pours from her lips. She purposely abandons her negative cleverness for a positive, and ruining, display of that faculty.

Schopenhauer, who thought very poorly of women—quite as poorly as Nietzsche—appreciated their cleverness while denying them anything higher. He wrote in *The World as Will and*

Idea, "Women have great talent, but no genius, as they always remain subjective," and his words have often been quoted. But though it is true that cleverness is as usual in women as in men and that genius is rarer, and though it is also true that on the whole women are more subjective than men, I am not convinced that the proposition holds water. Surely many male geniuses have been subjective, though perhaps not the greatest, and surely many objective artists are intensely commonplace. It strikes me as an interesting rather than as a conclusive observation.

But leaving this in doubt, I fancy that most women, who, as I have pointed out, prefer to keep their cleverness under control, are not really dissatisfied by the knowledge that, with relatively few exceptions, genius, as understood, has been denied their sex. Outstanding gifts would only startle men and make them suspiciously uncomfortable, whereas the real cleverness of women, the thing by which they rule their males, depends on humouring men into a condition of smugness.

Intellectually clever women are, of course, admired by men, but they are not the women most men wish for their wives or even, save in hours of expansion, for their associates. The woman who can listen to a man and, through her semi-silent responsiveness, keep both boredom and tension at bay, is the woman with whom most men find harmony. A man likes a woman to be intelligent, especially where his particular interests are concerned, but he does not like her to glitter with the effulgence of an electric bulb in a cellar. That sort of brilliance fills him with misgivings. And women were not born clever without knowing this. In truth, it is one of the things they know best.

Although, as I have said, the instinctive and the conscious cleverness of women merge into one another and cannot always be differentiated, one can assert loosely that, while a woman's feminine cleverness is compact of intangibles, her actual intelligence is essentially concrete. At one end of the scale is her intuitive perception of values, and at the other her wonderful skill in the material management of life.

Maybe this accounts for the fact that a woman's femininity,

taken in its widest meaning, appears both to enlarge and to limit her cleverness in dealing with men. The foolish husband who seeks consolation elsewhere by explaining, in more or less harrowing terms, that his wife does not understand him, is expressing an opinion which, however women may scoff at his technique, has as much verity as falsehood in it. His wife completely understands everything about him in so far as it affects her peace and happiness, but she does not at all understand that male, elfin strain which causes him to be romantic and dissatisfied. But if she could blend her instinct and her intelligence, if she could bring all her guns to bear at once, she would often be able to hold him when now she can only wring her hands in dismay or denounce him as a worm.

In practice, men and women, whose minds probably diverge more than they converge, have to rely on their flexible cleverness to make a success of their common existence. But it too often happens that both husband and wife use this cleverness more as a bomb than as a bridge. But, then, few of us can control our nervous sensibility beyond a point, and people not only fall back upon, but emphasize, their individual prejudices as soon as they lose their heads or their tempers.

I need not reiterate that one can no more escape from the horizons of one's sex than from the mannerisms of one's personality. That is why a woman's cleverness so frequently strikes a man as almost superhuman: it is on such an entirely different plane from his with regard to the matters on which it is usually exercised. But to argue thus is to evade the problem, and it is wiser to admit that it is not the cleverness which is remarkable as the sex which is different. Pit a woman's brains against a man's on some abstract theme and the result will depend on the individual capacity; but pit them against his on any problem to do with human conduct and the result will depend on reactions bound up with the sex. And because, in these circumstances, a woman may see things a man does not see, or sees from another angle, the man is liable to be astounded by the sharpness of her insight or the clarity of her verdict. But it is only male versus female.

By a word or two dropped in a silence, by a silence where words were expected, by the faintest change of expression which seems to speak in its stillness, women can convey their own meanings and cause either satisfaction or discomfort. It daunts the bravest man to witness such subtle demonstrations when they are aimed at him. But sometimes women create an atmosphere too rarefied for their needs or allow their femininity to outplay their intelligence.

In brief, one might say that women as a body are both cleverer and less clever than men suppose. And while stupid women may have more instinctive cleverness than intelligent women—I exclude those with a touch of genius—the women clever enough to make plodding men think themselves able and weak-willed men think themselves strong are the ones who disguise their cleverness most successfully in a haze of femininity.

CHAPTER XVII

THE INTUITION MYTH

IF there be one fixed idea common to nearly all women it is that they possess an infallible intuition, and that this not only differentiates them from men but gives them a definite advantage. So widespread is this belief and so tenaciously is it held that men have almost come to endorse it themselves, and you will hear a husband, who has had ample experience of the reverse, remark with a nervous smile : " Oh, if my wife thinks so, it's bound to be true ; her intuition is never at fault."

I have no wish to spoil the happy party, but I would like to know why women, in this respect, have such faith in their omnipotence. I can understand that a husband who absorbs the fairy tale is half-hypnotized into believing it—if a thing be sufficiently clearly and constantly dinned into one's head one begins to fancy there must be something in it—and half-frightened into saying he believes it, for it is far from a joke to come up against a woman's convictions ; but how is it that women themselves are so complacently sure about a faculty which is repeatedly playing them false ?

I presume the answer is that women, as men, are great self-deluders when it suits them and great explainers-away. Their intuitions (the refrain would go) were right, but circumstances made people act contrary to their characters. It does not matter how often this happens, because if a woman is positive of a thing no amount of argument will budge her an inch. People (including men) are seldom disconcerted by being proved in the wrong, for to begin with they seldom really credit it and, secondly, they have a marvellous capacity for forgetting their own definite statements. The dogmatist never learns not to be dogmatic ; dogmatism is a condition of mind, not an effort in logic.

And when, as with women, the dogmatism is based on a faulty

premise, there is no satisfactory answer. Women *are* intuitive, and if men will not accept the truth, so much the worse for them ! They are no more upset at their many miscalculations than are those cranks who are perpetually announcing that the end of the world will occur on a specific date and as perpetually changing the date.

Nobody denies that there is such a thing as intuition, but it is not an exact science, and the intuition of women, allowing for differences due to their femininity, is of precisely the same order as the intuition of men. In other words, it is sometimes right and it is sometimes wrong, and anyhow is probably founded more upon observation, which can swiftly and subconsciously take into its purview a vast number of tiny, telling clues, than upon mysterious psychic influences. Both men and women have all sorts of apparently inexplicable intuitions, but where there is nothing to guide them these intuitions are mostly guess-work. After all, if one spins a coin it must come up either heads or tails.

Women's faith in their intuition would strike men as an innocent foible did it not imply, in its essence, a contempt for men. This contempt is perhaps allied to a kind of respect—how can a great, strong brute like a man have the delicate sensibilities of a frail woman?—but it *is* contempt in that it suggests that women are the spiritual members of the race. And thus women are always ready to brush aside a man's reading of a social problem or a friend's character in favour of their own. Men might be so many savages for all their opinion counts.

At times, naturally, women are right, for there are some niceties they appreciate better than do men ; but at times they are wrong, for, by the same token, there are some niceties men appreciate better than do women. In any case it has little, if anything, to do with a sort of sixth sense. Either it is a question of applied observation or it is guessing on wild surmise or past experience.

The basic reason why women as a whole think they possess a special intuition of their own, a thing so completely above man's intuition as to be in a class by itself, is to be found in their femininity, of which it is an instinctive expression. They know they look at

life differently from men and therefore, because men are more direct in their approach, they have come to convince themselves that their own approach embraces shades of understanding beyond men's comprehension. But I suspect that these shades are often so tenuous that they blind their eyes to things of more significance. Frank Harris, in his *Oscar Wilde*, quotes Wilde as saying, "He is like a woman, sure to remember the trivial and forget the important"; and though, like so many of Wilde's aphorisms, there is a certain fluent smartness about this which awakens distrust, yet there is also something of truth in it. Women's intuition is rather liable to wander off into the paltry.

The man is to be pitied who dares to hint that he, too, has intuitions, but that they do not coincide with those of his wife. A pregnant silence, followed, maybe, by a far-away and fleeting smile, is apt to be his reward. Men are not allowed to have intuitions—at any rate, intuitions on the same level as a woman's intuitions—and if they do happen to have them they may even be told that they are not manly.

At the back of my head I cannot help wondering whether there be not yet another cause which makes women hold tight to the fable of their intuition. It occurs to me that to judge people and things by an intuitive process may be a device to save oneself from the trouble of thinking. And it may also be a safeguard against the charge of being called illogical. Women get rather tired of men's girding at their illogicality, but as that is how they *do* behave—and it is not illogical to them—how clever to have turned the tables by placing it on a high plane!

If one comes to consider it, perhaps women are just as entitled to have a poor opinion of men's logic as men have of theirs. It is men who rule the world—rule it according to their ideas of logic—and look what an awful hash they have made of it! Women's contempt for man-made muddling has thrown them in upon themselves, and many of them believe that the world would be a better and a tidier place did they have the running of it. Truly, it could hardly be a worse or a more raggedly disorganized place, though were women in command the only immediate result would be another set of troubles. And so, because a reasoned

logic has failed to produce anything but chaos, women's trust in intuition—that sense which transcends logic—has been strengthened.

I am not suggesting that these different motives are conscious in most women, but I do suggest that they are all part of women's mingled inconsequence and astuteness. They have to keep their end up against men, and what could be nimbler than to carry the war into the enemy's lines at one of those very points where men suppose themselves invulnerable?

Let me say that the man who blames women for the feminine quality of their minds does so simply because women are not men, and that that strikes me as being the argument of a misogynist. You might just as properly blame Nature for making women's faces hairless and men's bearded. But though in Nature's scheme one sex is obviously necessary to the other and neither can claim a predominant importance, this is no reason against men trying to analyse the female mind and describe its workings. Indeed, the effort, if bound to be rough and ready, is a compliment to women, for it shows men's profound interest in them. To imagine the world without women is as impossible as to imagine oneself as non-existent.

And so inexplicably is sex tied up with its emotional characteristics that if women, or men, ceased to exploit their weakness as well as their strength, something precious would depart from life. Men are often annoyed at women's claim to know more than they do know, but they would be intensely uncomfortable if women, *en masse*, suddenly abandoned their pretensions and announced that their intuition was, as regards ninety-five per cent of it, a myth. In fact they would be as staggered as if some metal were to lose its property.

The truth is that men and women are drawn to one another as much by their faults, in so far as such faults are inherent in their sex, as by their merits. The romance of contrast has always appealed to the adventurous spirit in man and the love of change in woman, and the opposite sex is so delightful because it is so utterly different. In all its manifestations sex must be disparate if people are to be its enthusiastic accomplices.

But such considerations should not influence our abstract judgment. In reality women like being criticized by men, partly because they are themselves devastating critics of other women, partly because they seldom take the criticism as applying personally, and partly because they think they may acquire some useful hints. For despite their intuition, they are aware that they sometimes do things which irritate men needlessly, and they are not, at the core, always as sure of their ground as they would wish to be.

And verily, if their intuition were as discriminating as they assert and their deductions as fine-drawn, they would invariably see which way the wind was blowing and set their course accordingly. But how often they do the wrong thing or say the wrong word; how often, in brief, they show themselves poor players at their own game. Men are easily attracted, but easily alienated. If women understood them more and were better able to grasp not merely their sensual, but their sensitive, approach, they would spare themselves many disappointments.

The unfortunate fact is that men and women do not always speak the same language and, though wanting to converge on one point, cannot help drifting apart through an incapacity to follow each other's meanings. Goodwill may be useless in face of what seems like deliberate stupidity, and the intuition of both men and women can be hopelessly waterlogged when, one would have judged, it should be riding the waves.

Indeed, in such a case, intuition, save to sharpen the pangs, is generally worthless. It is worthless, too, in those many cases in which sex attraction is combined with temperamental antipathy. That is to say, it is worthless in so far as it never prevents people behaving in a manner they subsequently regret. Why there should be attraction and antipathy at one and the same instant is very obscure, unless it be that opposites are drawn to one another by some natural law whose functions are undisclosed, but I have little doubt that it is frequently the cause of those violent and brief infatuations which start in a blaze and finish in boredom.

Intuition, in its real meaning, cannot cope with tense predicaments, and it seems to me that in all complex and disturbing

relationships the gifts on which women specially felicitate themselves vanish. The same is true of men. Theoretical knowledge has little to do with practical application, and even should a man be an excellent abstract judge of women, he is quite likely to be an unqualified ass in his dealings with them. When personality comes into play, general rules go by the board, and people of either sex would be only too thankful did they really have the intuition to guide their steps when they most need guiding.

But I am afraid that crisis-solving intuition is even rarer than fortune-telling foresight. How many friendships are ended, how many engagements broken, how many marriages ruined through misunderstandings which need never have arisen! Why, on women's side at least, did not intuition come to the rescue? Yet not only does it frequently fail when it is most required, but it can actually formulate problems that have no real existence and thus create unhappiness where there might have been happiness. The woman who decides by her intuition is liable to see a distorted image. But though one may try with all one's ability to make her perceive that this is so and thus give to hope the benefit of the doubt, one is seldom successful. Once she has made up her mind one cannot influence her, because, though she may appear to listen to you and even to be weighing the pros and cons, what has decided her finally is an intuitive evidence which words cannot reach and actions cannot alter. As the old proverb, of which there seem to be several versions, has it:—

A woman convinced against her will
Is of the same opinion still.

I do not imply that such evidence is without a basis, for the "feel" of a situation can be a very tangible thing and pride is not wounded without a reason. But there is something else: in the involved interaction of two personalities the inner truth can get itself disguised, and a nervous strain, bound up with the psychology of the atmosphere, produce a picture, in all its diabolically cunning shades, which is essentially fallacious. When some niggling question, easily soluble at the start but grown menacing through avoidance, has at last come up between a man and a

woman, neither reacts normally, and one of them is apt, from a feeling of tension and not in the least of equity, to blurt out the very thing about this question—a thing known to be groundless, but hovering over them so like a malignant spell that it leads to other falsities of word and deed by both of them—which wrongly convinces the other that all is over. How real this is and how little understood. If only intuition had that absolute insight it claims!

But, as a matter of fact, intuition is readily thrown off its balance, because in moments, say, of mortification, rage, or misery—and often the three emotions are blended into one—its vision is partial and thus misleading. The emphasis is on passion rather than on justice, and so, like the wish being father to the thought, it delivers any message it is asked to deliver. And this perhaps to the very woman who, in her hidden mind, longs to be reassured, and could be reassured if her intuition had not misled her. So many things in life, cruelties and faults which appear incapable of explanation or forgiveness—and neither sex has any monopoly—emerge, like beasts in a jungle fire, because fear is riding the wind.

All the same, though woman's intuition is able to cause lasting harm, due to its fallibility, it is also able to do much good. It may tell her, in some friend's worry, that all will be well, and though it does not follow that there are any grounds for this optimism, nevertheless optimism with an intuitive background can often bring cheer to those in anxiety or distress. And it brings cheer, not through a responsive faith or even because in worry one clings to a straw, but because people who see things in that way are frequently kind and staunch. However hardly life may have dealt with them, it has not taught them to abandon hope. (But of course I must admit that some people speak in such a strain owing to their being too soft-hearted to face facts or too indifferent to talk squarely.)

Tact is more useful to a woman than intuition—tact and its concomitant, flattery; but though many women practise on egocentric men, with varying success, the arts of tact and flattery, yet it is their intuition every time which appears to them so

peculiarly feminine a gift. If no experience can disillusion them, how much less likely is it that any words can influence. Anything one could write on the subject, literally anything, would only add to their conviction that men are unable to understand them.

I think one can get near the reason for this rather easily. A woman reads another woman so astutely, and can say such enlightening things about her to some male companion whose floundering conjectures are miles off the mark, that contempt for his obtuseness raises her in her own estimation and makes her feel that insight of this intuitive kind is a special feminine accomplishment. But, as a matter of fact, men have just the same accomplishment where other men are concerned and are equally astonished at the blindness of women. But this strikes them as quite natural, and they do not thereby claim to be the possessors of a unique talent. Why should they? In neither faculty is there anything in the least occult.

I feel sometimes that the only satisfying presentation of a woman's soul is to be found through the medium of the novel. Such men as Balzac, Turgenieff, Hardy, and James, to name a representative figure from each of the four countries which have produced the greatest novels, together with certain living writers, have done more to explain women to us than have all the treatises ever written. For their analysis is harnessed to creation, and thus the woman herself emerges and not merely the shadow of her outline. I would go farther and say that great novels can teach us more than personal observation, save along rather trivial lines; when one is too near a woman one's capacity for judgment is warped by her individuality acting on one's own. Naturally, novels tend to idealize, but then close contact may over-glorify or over-condemn, and so long as the woman is made to live for us in fiction, the portrait must contain a copious measure of the truth. If this be an exaggeration, it is an exaggeration in the right direction.

I would add, in conclusion, that though feminine intuition is not, in my estimate, specially significant in itself, it *is* significant as displaying one of the most feminine of all feminine traits.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE PITFALL OF TACT

TACT being a social virtue, women are apt to assume that as they are the social arbiters, it is, next to intuition, their particular attribute. They feel it is their clever handling which smooths the difficulties of communal existence and that a woman is always able to deal triumphantly with any set of conditions in which sensibility has to be flattered or vanity assuaged.

Indeed, they take their own tact so much for granted that if men do not respond to its blandishments as readily as they should, they are inclined to blame the men for being boors, instead of asking themselves whether perhaps they, the women, are merely following a formula instead of studying the characters and idiosyncrasies of the people with whom they are brought in touch. The artificial social tact which can make a party "go" is an arbitrary thing that bears no necessary relation to real tact, and many women who believe they are wonderfully tactful in their dealings are, on the contrary, fearfully obtuse. Such women congratulate themselves on an endowment they do not possess, and when they think they have the situation in hand are often irritating or boring the very people whom they fancy they are impressing or pleasing.

For to be really tactful one has to be both imaginative and sensitive, and I suspect that more men than women combine those two qualifications. This, at any rate, is my experience. Moreover, as men do not assume they are naturally so tactful that they can spare themselves special pains, they are, it seems to me, more likely to consider the personalities of those around them. I am not implying for a moment that, in the usual interpretation, the average man is more tactful than the average woman, for the reverse is probably true; but what I do imply is that the tact which is mainly negative—that is to say, the tact which is no more

than conventional civility and is the only tact most people exercise in public—is not tact at all in the highest meaning.

Social tact, as construed by so many women, is often a mere superficial gloss, but true tact derives from an inherent kindliness and delicacy of spirit. And just as the memory of a sharp rejoinder will give one an unpleasant taste for years afterwards, the memory of some tactful action or word in an embarrassing situation will be recalled with gratitude for ever. What opportunities people miss! Furthermore, true tact is not a passing phase, a sudden effort from which one sinks back in smug satisfaction, but an abiding frame of mind exquisitely adjusted to an appreciation of niceties.

Really tactful people of either sex are scarce, but one never forgets even a casual encounter with them and one always hopes to meet them again. The tactful woman, in particular, who goes through life with such humanity in her heart that its glow, while enclosing the company, appears to be personal in its every contact, and indeed *is* personal in that its instinct is impeccable, has everybody at her feet. Her inherent charity is lightened by perception and in putting the lowliest at their ease there is an individual touch which makes them feel pleased with themselves. Sir Richard Steele, in his oft-quoted line from *The Tatler*, "To love her was a liberal education," has caught auspiciously that sense of afflatus which such a woman imparts to those who are fortunate enough to be her friends.

But for one woman who is truly tactful, a hundred delude themselves. They consider that the customary courtesies offered with even-tempered grace give them a status beyond criticism, but they may be totally lacking in that kind of generous humility which makes people as interested in others as in themselves. For true tact is more than a social virtue, it is a real virtue.

In saying this I am not deriding social tact, which is an indispensable and agreeable accomplishment; I am only placing it in correct perspective. And if women were less self-conscious about it they would often be more tactful, because they would let their natures guide them instead of a set of rules which may, in all sorts of cases, be quite meaningless until a living breath has

stirred upon them. How lamentably flat sounds the right word in the wrong mouth, and how obvious is the mechanism of the would-be tactful woman in her stride! Good manners prompt women to be sociable, but more is needed than appropriate sentences and suitable questions.

In the result, a sort of restraint is caused and the whole thing turns into a convention by which people can conceal their vital thoughts. This may be excellent on most occasions, for the majority of us are not direct and are, in fact, fearful of directness, but it is getting very far away from the point. The practice of social tact schools women in artificiality, whereas true tact is, in essence, the power of overcoming that shy reserve with which most people, even when they appear complacent, face their fellows.

Although, as I say, it is only the rare personalities who are creatively tactful, yet, on the other hand, quite simple women are frequently more tactful than the type of woman to whom tact is a creed. They might not be able to manage a large gathering and wander from group to group with smiling words and expressive gestures, but they *are* able to draw out confidences in a style that would surprise a hostess who pats herself on the back for her social gifts and her knowledge of mankind. For the very person whose aloofness is frightened by a professionally tactful woman may be soothed by the artless observations of sincerity.

Many rather dull women mistake discretion for tact and because they are careful not to give themselves away or make any positive statement, think they are being very tactful when, as likely as not, they are being very tactless. For while it is clear that discretion is an ingredient of tact, it is equally clear that discretion by itself may be the negation of tact. In real tact there is always, however misleadingly, a sense of closeness, but in mere discretion there is always a sense of being kept at arm's length. For discretion, like the homilies of a family lawyer, can suggest that much is being left unsaid, whereas tact can give one the warm feeling of being taken into the inner circle. Those discreet women whose tact in changing the current and tone of a conversation creaks in its very silences are worse than babblers,

and one soon loses all interest in them. They would be so astonished, the poor dears, were they to suspect it !

It is pitiable to observe a dense, well-meaning woman fumble her cues in her effort to make discriminating comments. For example, on being introduced to an author of whom she has never heard—this comes home !—she will ask sweetly, “And what pseudonym do you write under ?,” the tactful assumption being that it is impossible she has not read his works. But if he has to answer that he uses his own name, her attempt at being tactful is shown up for what it is—the tactlessness of an unimaginative, but probably excellent, female who sees only one move ahead. Some women are capable of a denseness which would make the angels weep ; sublimely sure of being tact incarnate, they go about rubbing everyone up the wrong way. The most tactless people one ever meets are the women who are too stupid and prosaic to have a single inkling that they *are* stupid and prosaic. For such incurable tactlessness would not be allowed in a man ; he would be brought up sharp.

Discretion is only one of tact’s ingredients ; flattery is another. But there again, as in the case of discretion, flattery by itself can be thoroughly tactless. Praise without insight rouses a man’s latent caution and he begins to conjecture as to the purpose, or if not the purpose, then the value, of this fulsomeness. The successful flatterer must be a psychologist ; but women, who believe, with only too much truth, that men are extremely susceptible to flattery, often fail to grasp that even the most conceited of them have some sense of proportion and are not impressed by those compliments which, in their effusive generality, miss the finer shades of the very things about which they *are* vain.

But it matters not what experience they have had, women persist in holding to the idea that to flatter a man prodigally is to exhibit tact at its most irresistible. But though flattery properly applied—and, of course, some women do know how to apply it properly—is a weapon of infinite potency, yet once suspicion be aroused its magic force has gone for ever. The subtle flattery which exalts strong factors and ignores weak, and is thus careful not to be merely inventive, is most insidious, and few

men are proof against it ; but when it comes to gross exaggeration, a man's vanity is more often offended than soothed. And neither man nor woman can stand that ; it is practically unforgivable. The type which laps up careful flattery with avidity is the very type which passionately resents being made into a laughing-stock.

Tact is a fluid word and there is one special usage of it which is completely selfish. Numerous women practise an elaborate tact solely for the purpose of getting what they want. They work towards their goal with an extraordinarily long-sighted patience, achieving their ends at last by pretending that they had no ends to achieve. Tact of this description is sinuous as a snake's body and cold as a snake's eye. It ruffles no feelings, it upsets no prejudices, but bit by bit it drugs its victims. It was Oliver Wendell Holmes who wrote in *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*, "Man has his will—but woman has her way," but he did not add—his generation tended to be sentimental rather than realistic about women—that she has it because man's resolve can be undermined without his suspecting it and that woman's guile, concealed in an air of tactful acquiescence, can gradually change his outlook and knead him as if he were clay.

I am not blaming women in the slightest for using this power, for indeed it requires remarkable gifts to plan successfully in the face of stubborn opposition ; but I wonder whether this be not one of the reasons why women are so secretive and whether it does not stifle that spontaneity which has so much to do with the conquering charm of true tact. Even the best of women are always scheming, for theirs innately is the devious route, and thus it comes to pass that the domestic tact woman plies habitually may gradually destroy those wider sympathies which are the well-spring of real tact. For she cannot, unless she be a phenomenon, carry on a private campaign by employing all those arts of cajolery with which she has been endowed and yet give out to others from the stored riches she is consuming in private. Indeed, one might say that if the tact a woman employs in society is a kind of glaze to make life easy, the tact she employs in the home is another kind of glaze to make life profitable.

And that primarily is why women are so often less tactful in

the generally accepted meaning of the word than they credit themselves with being. They achieve certain results, I agree, but they are not altogether the results they would feign achieve, although they are usually unaware of this. For most women, as most men, want to be personally attractive to people at large and not merely display a glittering and competent exterior. But a woman's heart is so full of the unspoken and so protected by its polish that her graciousness is frequently clouded by her unreality.

It is a rather disconcerting fact that one often has to fight to get women to be their true selves—in so far as a woman is ever her true self openly. But if one be the victor in this contest, one does begin to note how commonly they have a humanity, and therefore a tact, which has remained in abeyance before the pressing call of social and family manœuvring. The truth is that although women take nothing for granted in some directions, they take too much for granted in others. They are suspicious of life, but not invariably of themselves. And because, in one sense, they are actively tactful without a pause, they may fail to see how a touch of thoughtful tact, which means some dropping of the mask, would, by helping others, do so much to help themselves.

Their instinct is to play for safety and not run the risk of being hurt. For it must be admitted that though sensitive people are the most naturally tactful, they are also liable to be touchy. This is truer perhaps of men than of women, but in different degrees it is true of both of them. A crude failure to respond to tactful overtures is deeply discouraging, and thus sensitive persons often find themselves out of touch with the friends to whom they would wish to be closest; irritated at the moment, they are afterwards too fearful of rebuffs to attempt a reconciliation. A tragedy-comedy! The thick-skinned always have an advantage over the thin-skinned, but then heightened perceptions of all kinds have their sorrows as well as their rewards. The only thing is not to expect too much of anyone, including oneself.

The functioning of tact assumes a desire for harmony, but human beings are so unfortunately constituted that they can be purposely tactless with the hope of wounding or annoying those

very beings whom, in another mood, they would be anxious to help. People take offence for the most fantastic reasons, and all the more violently when they are not sure they are being strictly just. And in that state they are likely to say things which may cause a breach, never to be healed; twenty acts of politeness do not count against one of rudeness. And thus that solvent tact which saves situations can, by changing its direction, exercise a baleful power.

That is the story of many a friendship. Human relations of every sort require for their continued existence as constant attention as does a garden. We alter ceaselessly and imperceptibly, and one needs all one's understanding tact to keep in touch with old friends as time goes on. And even so it must be a mutual effort if everything is not to dwindle at last into a grey twilight. And even those joint efforts may be finally useless, for so many friendships seem to have, in their very nature, a period of expansion and a period of decay. To look back upon one's own life is to concede the truth of this.

A symbol of this rise and fall is discernible in the most unexpected directions. The ancient Aztecs of Mexico chose every year a magnificent youth who, for the duration of that year, was treated as a god and surrounded with luxury and adoration. But on the appointed day he was led to the sacrificial altar and his palpitating heart torn, with hideous rites, from his body. In an instant he was not only dead, but, in the acclamations greeting his successor, forgotten. And consider the fate awaiting a prize steer at a fat-stock show. While the show is on it is visited by admirers, photographed for the Press, paragraphed in the papers; but the moment the show closes and the curtain is rung down, ignominious death is its immediate doom and its memory passes instantly into oblivion. And in a similar way many love affairs or friendships, which appeared invincible and brought out all those victorious emotions which, in their different degrees, love or friendship can evoke, end up in total darkness. Tact gives way to anger, anger to indifference, indifference to forgetfulness. Indeed, beyond a point tact has no influence at all, though sometimes that point is reached because tact was not displayed in time.

This is perhaps the wrong note on which to finish such a discussion. But I wanted to emphasize why it is that tact, which, in its various manifestations is essential to our well-being, has to be nursed from day to day if it is not, through our very knowledge of its value, to be misused to our ruin.

CHAPTER XIX

UNFAIRNESS AS AN ART

MEN not being instinctively jealous of one another, as women are, have a camaraderie which women neither trust nor understand. It is a sort of defensive alliance founded on a half-humorous resignation, a kind of world-wide club in which they can recover their self-respect and thus face with equanimity the inevitable pin-pricks of feminine society. Smoking-room jokes, if women but knew it, are much more a sign of man's independent spirit than of his depravity, and the general truisms about women which fill talk and newspapers year after year with feeble jocularities (not so feeble, incidentally, in talk as in the press) have, as have old proverbs, a great deal of truth in them.

Of course, they are not the whole truth, which is an infinitely more complex affair, and they apply in varying degrees according to the woman; but it may be said that there are certain primary things about the psychology of women which are almost universal in their application. This in itself is not an adverse criticism, for it is obvious that the sexes must inevitably hold their own special views on hundreds of subjects and must inevitably approach life differently, but the particular points I intend to mention here are extremely disconcerting to the average man.

In saying this I do not deny that the average woman also finds many things to disconcert and even irritate her about men, and that it would be just as easy to write on the unfairness of men as on the unfairness of women. But that is not my theme. Furthermore, I want to explain that when I use "unfairness," I am not using it in an absolute sense, and that if I am ready to repeat with Otway (*The Orphan*), "What mighty ills have not been done by Woman!", I am aware, not only that "Man" might have been substituted, but that those actions of one sex annoying to the other

are relative to the relationship and all part of an inevitable cycle. Let me now return to my argument.

For example, the stale music-hall gag about women insisting on the last word is no exaggeration, though it need not always take the form of language. A fishwife uses her lungs to reduce her spouse to a dithering silence, but a gently-nurtured lady can assume such a tight-lipped, frozen expression, and go about her duties so like a martyred somnambulist, that almost any peace-loving husband is compelled to beg for an explanation and grovel at her feet. Different tactics, same result. Women will be having the last word at the Last Trump.

Again, women really do succeed in putting men in the wrong whenever it suits their convenience; and that, roughly speaking, is whenever there is a clash of wills. They can twist your words and your actions to mean anything they want, and so a man's most candid and genuine explanations may only serve to hasten his undoing. This is a curious trait, in that few women believe they are self-righteous. On the contrary, they believe they are unmasking you for your own good—unless indeed they are in one of their Olympian tempers, when they will not listen to anything. Even a stupid woman has a fiendish facility for putting men in the wrong, though the champion performer, as might have been expected, is the woman who is getting tired of a man.

And observe how seldom a woman will apologize even when an apology, under any reasonable code, is absolutely called for. She will show a man she is sorry in various soft and endearing ways, she will be all over him with her Delilah charm, but she will not say: "I was in the wrong; please forgive me." Or if she does admit to any fault, it is almost invariably in such a minor key that she might just as well have said nothing. It is always wiser not to press the point; women do not readily forgive any slur on their self-esteem, though their regard for the self-esteem of men is apt to be negligible.

Quite negligible. A certain type of female does not hesitate to use her prerogative to snub a man—I am not referring to the occasions when snubs are in order—and she may be heedlessly severe merely out of a wish to exploit her sex. But woe to the man

who, in retaliation, snubs a woman! However considerate and courteous he may have been in the past, however friendly were their former relations, he will arouse a cold hatred which will survive as long as life.

I suppose the truth is that women dare not imperil their position by admitting to shortcomings, and are, in fact, for ever wanting to strengthen it by parading their power. Of course, feminine deportment is largely a matter of individual personality; but there are many different methods of achieving the same effect and in the sum-total all women are seen to be actuated by similar motives.

Women habitually use weapons of defence or attack which they would despise in a man were he to use them. Even their tears are frequently little other than a gesture—if they do not indulge in the “vapours” nowadays, as did the damsels of 1820, it is only because the fashion has changed—and they will purposely emphasize their weakness to gain their ends. In truth, one might go farther and say that they will take advantage of what they know to be men’s general ideas about them and pretend to inherent defects of character so that they can get their way.

If one asks why this should be so, the simplest answer is that women are not men. Untold centuries of experience—it is the sort of explanation which *must* keep cropping up in any study of women—have taught them that only wile can overthrow strength and that every ruse is permissible where men are concerned. In all discussions about women one comes to perceive that subconscious reasoning underlies much of their apparent calculation, and that their irrelevance—their lack, that is to say, of masculine logic—is often nothing but a misplaced instinct of self-preservation. And how can one blame them for it? A woman has no control over her background, although naturally she would immediately put you in the wrong and make you feel utterly thwarted did you dare to present this as an argument to counteract her assumptions.

Women, as I have remarked, expect a standard of conduct in men which they feel no need to follow themselves. However upright a woman may be, however loyal a wife and devoted a mother, she is not above using grossly unfair means to obtain her

objectives. She is a mistress of all those arts which begin with wheedling and end with raging, which make a man either fatuously pleased with himself or so profoundly uncomfortable that he would do anything for a little quiet.

Those awful things called "scenes" are by no means awful to large numbers of women. They are an emotional outlet which both clears the air and gratifies their ego. I do not suggest that the majority of women want to make scenes, but merely that some build up their atmosphere with matchless skill and do not shrink from them at all as a man shrinks from them. There, again, they count on the man giving up the struggle, and thus an old-fashioned row is frequently engineered by a woman to get her safely out of a tight corner.

Women have an unpleasant habit of playing up their sex in order to justify behaviour that is not really excusable. Why, to give a mild example, should a woman think she is quite entitled to be half an hour late for an appointment, when not only would she resent your being five minutes late, but resent your showing, even by a glance, that you objected to her unpunctuality? Perhaps she thinks that by keeping a man on tenterhooks she is adding zest to the meeting and that uncertainty makes her all the more desirable. Heaven only knows! Maybe she is just not going to bother to put herself out for a man. All the same, to talk bluntly, men would much prefer that women were imbued with Royalty's ideas on punctuality.

Yes, women are sometimes maddeningly casual. The pleasure one derives from spending money on a girl is often vitiated by her air of conferring a favour. Are we to believe that women would rather sit at home and that it is only their touching and magnanimous natures which induce them to accept our invitations? Certain types of women take men's hospitality too much for granted, and few things are more exasperating than to entertain a woman who considers her company, *unaccompanied* by a word of thanks—or, if a word, a mere perfunctory word—ample reward for all one's trouble and expense. (I agree, however, that some women can be completely gracious in their smiling silence.) I am not denying that a woman's company *may* be ample reward

for anything, but she should not rub it in by her complacency. Such a girl is likely to find herself (though for a different reason) like the heroine of Wordsworth's poem, *She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways* :—

A maid whom there were none to praise
And very few to love.

Women's bearing to men is, in its more cynical moods, based on two very different suppositions : first, that she is a goddess and ought to be worshipped, and second, that the principal idea of a man's life is to get something out of her. Well, she can assuredly look like a goddess and men undoubtedly do have their schemes ; but is she a goddess at heart and are women entirely single-minded ? The answer to both questions is a ponderous negative. The relationship between the sexes is inherently a sort of contest, but women, with a feminine unscrupulousness born of a feminine fear, feel that they are entitled to carry all the weapons.

There is an underlying hysteria in women which is always working towards the surface, and much must be allowed for their imperfect nervous mechanism. Women, for instance, know that nagging is a peculiarly odious habit, but there are times when they literally cannot help nagging. And they have a quaint trick of arguing that if they admit to this or any fault, they are morally free to indulge it without criticism. They really do think that once they are frank enough to acknowledge their defects, the next step is not to try to correct them, but to continue to practise them in a sort of halo of justification. If they would only say that they enjoy nagging (or whatever it happens to be), that would be something ; but no, their conscience must be salved. They resemble those people who, misunderstanding the confessional, believe themselves to be at liberty to sin again if they have confessed and received absolution.

But some women use exactly the reverse tactics. Their system is not to admit defects, which appear present to unbiased eyes, but to place their actions on the highest plane. Such a woman will observe, " Thank goodness, nobody can accuse *me* of being jealous ! ", and then proceed to give a most convincing parade of jealousy. But do not misread her : she is only pointing

out to a man that there are limits, and that jealousy has nothing whatsoever to do with her dislike of his deceitfulness, brazenness and so forth ! If she castigates him, it is because her moral nature has been revolted ! It is surprising how many nice women delude themselves in this manner ; theoretically despising jealous exhibitions, they persuade themselves that the exhibitions they stage arise from superior motives.

But if the female nagger is a blight, the female termagant is a horror. There are women who have mastered the science of bullying far better than any schoolboy, and as such women are invariably megalomaniacs they give rein to their tantrums under a pose of injury which is positively nauseating. Men in general are scared of a termagant, and therefore such a woman often storms her path through life and makes everyone around her miserable without ever hearing the truth about herself. Immersed in her own perfection, she bludgeons her family into sullen silence, timid animosity, and habitual subterfuge. (Admittedly, some men are also repulsive bullies in the domestic circle.)

At heart, women are lawless and do not possess those scruples which the better class of men possesses. What woman, for example, would not willingly evade customs duties and then justify her action by sophistry that would not deceive an infant-in-arms ? " Why shouldn't I bring in my lace free when it cost me so much, and hasn't the Government sufficient money without my mite ? " And so on, and so on. As individuals, women can be, very frequently are, boundlessly generous ; as members of society they are often anti-social.

Even when most vexed a man cannot but admire the uncanny skill with which a woman can turn the tables and make him feel a brute when he is only reminding her, say, that she is expressing views to-day which are precisely opposed to what she expressed yesterday. One may refer such things to feminine illogicality, but I am not sure they ought not to be referred to feminine arrogance. After all, if one is a goddess, how can one be in the wrong ? Or might I suggest this : that as man, where women are concerned, is a suppliant, his position has a fatal weakness which women are quick to perceive and take advantage of ?

Women object to any adverse criticism unless buttered heavily with praise, though their ability to tell waspish "home truths" is renowned. And they are skilled at telling them in such an aggrieved and yet forgiving tone that, whether true or not, there is no come-back. You feel that perhaps they have noticed defects in your character of which you were ignorant and you resolve, in a chastened mood, to do better another time. Afterwards, however, you begin to ask yourself what they would have said had you pointed out some of the things about *them* which *you* have treasured up. Or rather, it is unnecessary to ask yourself anything, for you know very well what they would have said. Heads I win and tails you lose is not a bad, nor even a particularly loose, description of a particular, though not universal, feminine attitude.

I imagine that men break as many promises to women as women break to men, but they usually break them in a sheepish manner, whereas women, when the crash is due, break them with startling abruptness. Men dislike causing pain or provoking incrimination, but women, once they have ceased to love, have few such inhibitions. Perhaps they are more realistic and perhaps their method is kinder in the long run, even if that is not their motive; but though each case must be considered separately and though many a woman, as many a man, is driven to desperation, yet I contend that women are much more callous when it comes to a "show-down". Their own feelings blind them to suffering, or, at any rate, make them indifferent to it. The highly-strung, neurotic woman is often, beneath her emotional manner and her fervent oaths of fidelity, dangerously unstable and, in adversity, cruel and merciless. And yet, ordinarily, she is just as often charitably-minded and humane.

Personally, I think that all eternal promises between men and women should be avoided, for nothing is more treacherous than the language of flowers and nothing more fleeting than moments of harmony; but if one cannot help making or inviting them—and who can at times?—how much wiser it is to retain, in your innermost soul, a spark of scepticism and humour. Then you will not be left hopelessly desolate when you are informed, often in accents of contemptuous indifference, that everything is at an

end. The emptiness of life can be a very terrible thing, but it is not quite so terrible if you have never relied too deeply on the possibility of bliss or the faithfulness of women. (I suppose that, from their own angle, women could echo all this paragraph.)

To get anywhere near an understanding of women one must keep steadily before one the fact that they are, in every essential respect, more primitive than men. Thus there is an innate violence about them which, under their age-old social training, is hidden in the alluring garment of their femininity. This, taken alone, would be rather exciting, but women have become aware of it themselves. Thus their behaviour is both instinctive and deliberate, and they feel that their actions are not to be judged by the standards which men, so long their unworthy masters, have evolved.

And the more attractive a woman is, the more, in her opinion, is she entitled to hold this view. That perhaps is why women like to be thought incalculable, believing that men are fascinated by their inconsequent behaviour. But a very little of such inconsequence goes a long way and men soon come to prefer sense to nonsense. Women fancy that if they throw an occasional crumb of flattery to a man it is all that is necessary to make him their slave, and that once he is their slave they can do practically anything. But men are not really such fools—not deep down—although, through their desires or their trepidations, their behaviour is often deplorably weak.

Probably a majority of men *are* vainer than they ought to be, but they are not composed of nothing but vanity. When a woman is surest that a man is totally controlled by her will, she is frequently on the verge of a harsh awakening.

CHAPTER XX

AN ANATOMY OF NAGGING

ON the assumption that one must look to heredity to explain, at least partially, all of humanity's characteristics, it seems probable that the feminine habit of nagging is, in its origin, a facet of woman's elaborate mechanism of self-protection. As a timid animal bites when cornered, so a woman, knowing that she is feebler than man, attacks him with her tongue.

Of course, this is to put it too simply, not only because though the ostensible reason for nagging may be absent yet the instinct remains, but because nagging in its extreme, and therefore, in popular opinion, its typical form may also be bound up with hysteria and something native to femininity itself. A nagging woman may, in her mind, be giving voice merely to righteous indignation, but behind all that there are ancient repressions and fears which have long since become part of the feminine make-up.

The fact is, women do not nag only to get their way or humiliate others, but because it is an explosive means of ridding themselves of age-old grudges. The convinced nagger—an unusual type—finds a deep satisfaction in turning the tables completely by mastering, through her weakness, a man who in another epoch would have mastered her through his strength. I do not suggest that the hopeless nagger, who makes her husband's life a hell on earth, is not prompted by obvious motives, but merely that at the back of these motives she is also prompted by instincts about which she knows so little that, were she told the truth, she would be mortally offended.

Naturally everyone, women as much as men, detests the professional nagger, whether of the arrogant or the plaintive breed, but nearly all women practise minor nagging as a last resort, although many of them are themselves unaware of this. They would argue that all they want to do is to keep the people for whom

they are responsible up to the mark, and that unless they indulged in occasional rebukes and criticisms everything would go to pieces and all sense of responsibility be lost.

But unfortunately nagging is the wrong way to set about it. This air of moral loftiness is invariably resented, as is the repetition of its truisms, and though a hen-pecked husband may be submissive and silent, venom is gathering in his heart. Men never bring themselves to believe that women have any more right to lecture them than they have to lecture women, and even when they listen to such lectures with dreary resignation their downtrodden demeanour is no mirror of their thoughts.

The nagger may often have a good case, but the humblest victim soon begins to perceive, with a sort of malicious satisfaction, that however faulty he may be, he is not so faulty as the woman who is perpetually and unpleasantly pointing out his shortcomings. It is very easy to throw away an advantage by over-stressing it, and while one word of disapproval, uttered in the correct tone, may be telling, to nag constantly defeats its purpose.

But conduct is only spasmodically actuated by self-interest, not to mention common sense, and a nagging woman has no real control over her speech. She thinks, no doubt, that her annoyance is justified and that she is a wronged saint, but more often than not she is in such a state of nerves that all her values have become distorted and she can listen only to the voice of primordial womanhood. For the nagging of a decent woman is a symptom of feminine hysteria.

I say a "decent" woman, because the real nagger—the woman who is always nagging and whose happiness it is to see others uncomfortable—is not a decent woman, although she may convince herself that she is swayed by the most altruistic reasons. Indeed, there is more than a tinge of sadism in such a woman and she discovers a nameless gratification in her insults. Sadism, of course, is a very elemental emotion, closely allied to sex, and the sadism of a nagger is probably the perversion of a normal sex instinct. By taking the war into the enemy's camp and paying him off for centuries of oppression she satisfies her pride and desire for revenge.

Cruelty, like pain, is a great puzzle, and it emerges in a score of different directions. Men, I agree, are just as cruel as women, and the shrinking wife who has to face her husband's persistent taunts is as much to be pitied as the morose husband who has to face his wife's persistent nagging. People in general hate those they have injured, and thus all forms of cruelty excite to further cruelty, and nagging, for example, gets worse the more cringingly it is received. But though many men are expert naggers in their own line, yet that peculiar kind of feminine nagging, of which, I repeat, nearly all women are capable, seems to me of quite a different order. For it is mingled with the caged feeling of being in a false position, and that makes it reckless once it gets going.

Many women insensibly appreciate this and bitterly regret their own outbursts and that incapacity to stem the torrent of their words which compels the nagger to go on nagging long after her purpose has been accomplished. George Eliot knew what she was talking about when she wrote in *Felix Holt*: "Half the sorrows of women would be averted if they could repress the speech they know to be useless—nay, the speech they have resolved not to utter." For putting aside the fact that the desire to nag is often an urgent impulse, arising from grievances latent in her sex, it is also true that numbers of women are singularly ungoverned in their speech and utterly unable to keep secrets. Of course, numbers of women, on the contrary, are discretion itself and numbers of men gossip, but it is probably not inaccurate to say that women, on the whole, are the more talkative sex and the more likely to cause trial and vexation by the quality of their remarks. Whether the habitual gossip is often an habitual nagger has never yet been the subject of a census, but it would not surprise me to learn that she is: both types enjoy the sound of their own voices; both types are heedless about what they say; both types show little feeling or discretion in their exercise of power.

Constant practice has made women thoroughly conversant with the weak spots in men, and they have learnt that nagging, like tears or sulks, is one of the things few men can stand. And as an honourable woman hates to weep before a man, knowing that it

gives her an unfair advantage, and yet now and then cannot help weeping, so does she despise nagging, although there are moments when she nags automatically. Moreover, an honourable woman is, by and large, a balanced woman and she is aware that nagging, far from solving her problems or lightening her burdens, will only create new troubles or widen the breach. But when the pressure to nag is there, that does not stop her, because if a woman be sufficiently upset she reverts to instinctive conduct. She has her calculated weapons, but beyond a certain point they lose their calculated effect and merge into the primitive.

I mentioned weeping, for instance, and would add here that, while a tyrannical woman often uses tears as a form of nagging, this does not mean that, though partly hypocritical, they are not also partly genuine. The invented grievance grows more real the more she yields to it, the temper more violent, and in the upshot she will weep as genuinely in her rages as will a dignified woman in her loss of restraint. The true and the false are inextricably mixed in hysteria, and a nagging woman is frequently a bundle of self-pity.

There is a class of woman—not necessarily a bad, though always a tiresome and unimaginative, class—who loves to “manage” and whose aim in life is to improve others. Such women often fade into celibate occupations where they can exercise their reforming zeal unhampered; but when they marry and cannot have people and things exactly as they want them, they are liable to become naggers on principle. Women of this type, to whom the metaphor about the mote and the beam frequently applies with much precision, find fault with more satisfaction than they offer praise, and their husbands, families, and domestic servants are everlastingly being read lessons on the enormity of their behaviour.

Then there is a class of woman who is naturally quarrelsome and the victim of her temperament. I admit that there are also quarrelsome men, but a quarrelsome man does not have so wide a range of inherited grudges behind him and is therefore, as a rule, more amenable to reason. The really quarrelsome woman is always seeing slights where no slights are intended and she

usually ends up by venting her anger on some close relation, such as a husband, who, in some unexplained manner, is held responsible for everything. Women of this class are pests pure and simple and no wonder the author of the *Book of Proverbs* let himself go when describing them: "It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop than with a brawling woman in a wide house."

The brawling man, too, is common enough, especially on pay day; but few men have the persistence of women—that persistence which, admirable in its proper place, is one of the most deplorable attributes of the nagger. Once a woman gets an idea into her head, she cannot rest until she has done something about it. Men do not let things gnaw at them in the same way as do women, perhaps because they have so many interests to occupy their minds, but more probably because their minds are not so compartmented. There is something about a man's outlook which eternally baffles and exasperates a woman, and her fits of nagging are often no more than a means of expressing this.

I do not think that men make enough allowance for this bafflement, for it is not, so to speak, in the forefront of the picture women draw of themselves. Women cherish the theory that they are incomprehensible to men, but they seldom allude to the fact that men are incomprehensible to them. A woman's incomprehensibility is supposed to add to her attraction, but the effect would be lost did she not also cultivate the assumption that men are quite plain to her. Therefore it is the more irritating for a woman to discover that, despite her confident front where men are concerned, they are still a mystery.

And it must be remembered that though women are firm upholders of the social conventions, yet numbers of them seem to think that to be well-acquainted with a man entitles them to be frank in private to the point of roughness. Actually, the reverse is true, and one should be particularly careful to respect the personalities and opinions of those one knows best. But these headlong fits of feminine anger, during which, to their inward dismay, women are apt to go beyond the limits of the reasonable, are a by-product of nagging. Of course, the real nagger is intentionally

rude, but some women, who are quite the reverse of born naggers and very kindly in themselves, are rather unrestrained once they start. But then one must remember that they do start only because they are goaded beyond endurance—which may be the man's fault. Anyhow, we are all liable to be rather ungoverned on occasion, and such outbursts should be ignored.

There are probably as many violent men as women—perhaps, indeed, there are more, for it is in the character of men to cultivate rather than curb their passions—but it is the arrogance, the egotism, of the convinced female nagger which are so repellent, especially when she is sustained by moralizing thoughts about her own virtues and the need to put her foot down. Violent people are often jolly on the surface, but small-minded people, who seethe with thwarted ambition and spite, are invariably most unattractive.

This feminine arrogance, changing a high-spirited woman into a virago, arises from a complex set of emotions not easy to disentangle. To begin with, no doubt, there is an inherent vigour of character and conceit of self, but there is also a conflict between a feeling of inferiority and a feeling of superiority. The woman is wrathful at being a woman, yet glad she is not a man. She takes advantage of her position to utter words and behave in a manner which, were she a man, would be intolerable; but at the same time her naggings and her moods are closely allied to personal wretchedness. A man's arrogance, however unjustified, is usually based on self-assurance, but a woman's arrogance is apt to be one prolonged scream against fate.

But here, again, a woman's explanation of her behaviour would bear no resemblance to a man's explanation of it. And I agree that final truth about all such explanations is far to seek. To a woman, nagging, talking broadly, is a protest against man's mingled disloyalty and incompetence, whereas to a man it is a sign of her unconquerable desire to interfere with him, and interfere ill-naturedly, for no adequate reason. Perhaps there is truth in both contentions, though maybe the really co-ordinating explanation should be sought for in the very nature of woman.

I touched on this before, but I scarcely know how to enlarge

upon it, for it is impossible to give even approximately accurate values to the characteristics of sex. Perhaps, indeed, these values are entirely contingent and the contrasts we observe have no absolute significance at all. In brief, when we think we have detected something derogatory about women, we are probably only describing phenomena relative to ourselves and are not entitled to draw any conclusions. But it is rather difficult to remain philosophically aloof when a woman's lashing tongue hangs over a household like a curse, leaving a wake of misery in the subsiding storm.

Jealousy of one kind or another is the goad of most feminine scenes, though, of course, there are women with a universal grievance who are always being "put upon" by everybody; but as vindictive jealousy neither invites nor breeds confidences, the only result is a sort of self-laceration which finds its morbid satisfaction in wounding and being wounded. Many men and women are simply incapable of getting close to those to whom they yearn to be close; their sense of injury excludes fair play and at last the one asset left to them is abuse. And thus the nagging husband or wife may destroy the very thing they live in deadly fear of losing.

It is, indeed, true that beyond a certain point only a miracle can set things right, but though women, in particular, know this quite well, they are chary of admitting it, and even when they are not prepared to yield an inch, cling to the hope that their tirades will one day have an effect exactly contrary to what tirades always have. Did any one ever hear of a nagging woman who abandoned nagging, and yet is it not true that the lives of many women are centred in those they torment? Admittedly, a fixed habit is hard to break, particularly when it results from the merging together of a natural tendency and a belief in one's mission; and some women, who are everlastingly girding at their husbands, are not only devoted to them but have the highest opinion of them. They have just got into the way of nagging, and because their husbands are good-natured or resigned they go on nagging without actually thinking what they are doing. It has become part of their existence.

The incompatibility of some married couples, on the other hand, causes a mutual nagging and recrimination that is one of the most lamentable things in the world. The futile frustration of the ill-mated finds its outlet in a nervous irritability which darkens the atmosphere, and people who may be charming to everybody else can be devils at home. When that condition exists there is nothing to choose between men and women, and in contemplation of such cases one might almost ask oneself whether it were necessary to write about nagging as a predominantly feminine trait. However, one has to consider the matter from a wider angle.

And from that wider angle one perceives that nagging, in the true meaning of the word, *is* predominantly a feminine trait. The ancient and the modern blend to produce it with that inescapable logic which causes so much of what is apparently illogical in women, and it must be studied in perspective to be analysed with any pretence at accuracy.

CHAPTER XXI

WHY WOMEN TELL LIES

So many traits in women can be traced back to the experiences of their remote sisters that it is often quite impossible to disentangle the conscious from the unconscious. They exist side by side, and though a woman may act in a certain way because she thinks it is going to benefit her, it is quite likely that she is being impelled more by instinct than by will.

The habit of telling falsehoods seems to me a case in point. It is second-nature with nearly all women, and one's personal observation of it is backed by the literature of all peoples and of all ages. From out the vast welter let me quote one comprehensive remark to be found in Masfield's narrative poem, *The Widow in the Bye Street*: "Women were liars since the world began."

Yes, pretty well since the world began. I suspect the habit started to develop long before the dawn of history, when the caveman arriving home in a nasty temper and twirling his club must have been a difficult "customer" to handle tactfully. For thousands of years women have had to deceive men to get, from their point of view, a fair deal; and thus to conceal their thoughts is like robing themselves in a protective mantle. But being driven by this inherited impulsion, they often fail to see that truth would serve them better than fiction and that they are only tying themselves into complicated knots for no valid reason.

It is something that simply cannot be helped, and therefore it is no more use attempting to explain it logically than attempting to give a definite reason for the laws of gravity. That, at any rate, is a man's attitude, and so far as the conduct of women's practical life is concerned I think men are in the right. The thing is at once too obscure and too irremediable. And also so feminine that it must be regarded rather as an idiosyncrasy of sex than as a blame-

worthy fault—at least, within reason. We have to remember that the more feminine a woman is, the more sophisticated she is likely to be, and that this complicates matters. It all sounds rather odd, for the more feminine a woman is, the more primitive also in a sense—and yet it is true; one can only say that many contradictions blend together to make up woman. Thus we are presented at one and the same moment with the spectacle of instinctive lying, whose amazing efficiency derives from the fact of its being second-nature, and of calculated lying, brought to the finest pitch of deception. The snare is indeed set!

I am not going to pretend that men, in all sorts of gradations, do not also lie when it suits them; but I do say that, as a rule, they only lie with a purpose. Despite the remarks of Kant and Conrad's Marlow, the average person regards mild lying on occasion not alone as harmless, but as essential. Life is so involved and existence so hazardous that we are all, men and women alike, searching for bolt-holes into which we can retire when too hard pressed. And what bolt-hole appears to offer a surer escape at times than the ready falsehood?

It is a specious argument, but it has a most uncanny trick of letting one down. Even white lies, those fibs which are considered by few men and no women as of any consequence whatsoever, being simply oil for the social machine, do not always lead to innocuous results. For this same machine sometimes goes wrong, and then, caught in its febrile *tempo*, a woman will lie herself to safety without the slightest qualms. Long practice of the innocent use has blunted her susceptibilities, and when a crisis arises she rushes to the illicit use. Her general morale has been lowered, her appetite for large lies has been whetted by her success in small, and she comes at last to derive a positive pleasure from her skilful manipulation of mendacity.

To understand why women lie so glibly one must understand those panics which are, in truth, part of their normal life. A woman can feel cornered when a man sees nothing to worry about, and feel cornered, furthermore, for reasons which he would not properly grasp were he told. The immemorial is knocking on her brain, and this, in conjunction with the many obvious

traps that surround her, can induce a state of mind which is actually frantic. Then, meek though her nature may be, she will strike out recklessly.

Being gregarious, we are bound to maintain in social intercourse a veneer which itself is transparently a sort of lie, and it is plain that we cannot act with the frankness of animals. And as women are the kingpins of society and have to adopt all kinds of poses to smooth out the angularities, they are naturally compelled, even more than men, to practise deception. It is no use splitting hairs or one would soon find oneself in the middle of a meaningless controversy as to where truth ended and falsehood began. We have to hedge at every turn, and to be invariably truthful in tiny as well as in big matters, in a negative as well as in a positive sense, would lose us all our friends in an incredibly brief period. Women face this with equanimity, and as social prevarication within limits is a recognized convention, it is perfectly legitimate. Tell the truth but not the whole truth is a sensible precaution.

But women do not always allow themselves to be guided by it. Their background gives to lying for its own sake a sort of value, and they think they are safeguarding themselves by concealing their real reactions. No doubt they usually rationalize this instinct, for the double pull is ceaselessly at work; but at the same time they cannot help their devious mentality, any more than a dog can help turning round and round before it curls itself to sleep, just because (if the theory be true) its wild forebears, who lived amid tall grass, did the same.

But I wonder whether women, who in many respects are far more realistic than men, do not have a secret understanding of themselves which they never divulge? All of us, of course, have our cold inner thoughts which critically disparage our outward complacency, but I am inclined to think that a woman's silent communings are even more devoid of illusion than are a man's. She recognizes that she is the sport of a tangled heredity and, recognizing it, she fronts the world without self-pity.

A woman is as liable to distrust a man as a man is liable to distrust a woman; but usually, though she is prepared for his lying, it does not disconcert her—I am not talking of the end of

romance—because its origin is selfish and its selfishness obvious. But a man is never quite sure how to take a woman, unless he knows her extremely well; her candour, in his eyes, is nearly always debatable. She may be absolutely genuine and she may be doing all she can to make him see this, but if one has ever watched the half-quizzical, half-suspicious glances a youth will cast at a girl with whom he is conversing seriously, the underlying masculine scepticism is apparent. For men are terrified of that feminine mockery which may lurk beneath a sympathetic exterior.

Curiously enough, women do not really object to their reputation as liars or they would long since have started a much stronger counter-offensive against men in this respect. And what data they would have for it! They like to be surrounded by mystery, and though it is occasionally tiresome to be misunderstood, yet on the whole they are glad to leave men guessing. I dare say they are wise: how dull existence would be if women were as pellucid as coral pools, and how useful a gift it is to maintain a dangling attitude! Women, in the mass, would rather be thought untruthful than unsociable.

The average woman uses such finesse that her very faults are seldom disagreeable. On the contrary, being part of the picture man has evolved, they seem merely feminine, though sometimes rather frightening. Indeed, strange as it sounds, a man can both believe and disbelieve in a woman at the same instant. He may be aware that she is deceiving him, but he is quite capable of feeling that, beneath the surface, she is really true to him. Vanity, hope, and a sort of longing for assurance enable him to swallow what he is positive is false. Shakespeare, who knew most things, knew this (*Sonnets*):—

When my love swears that she is made of truth
I do believe her, though I know she lies.

Clumsy liars are rare among women, but the affected female, whose life is a living lie, is fairly common. She may be normal in all other directions and at heart thoroughly worthy, but though her affectation *may* be simply a form of exaggerated shyness—very useful word, “shyness”—it is more often a form of exaggerated

ego. I cannot help feeling that such women, scintillating or appealing as they may appear, are nevertheless extremely poor psychologists. For it matters not whether an affected woman is of the ultra-worldly type, who builds a kind of glass wall about her and is unapproachable, or of the type who uses a sort of baby language and displays a vague helplessness to make herself the more attractive, or of the purposely "womanly woman" type who, under a pretence of youthful motherliness, encourages men to make idiots of themselves, she is equally wide of the mark. Men distrust affected women, just as they dislike affected men, and, whatever their actual merits, sooner or later they snap their fingers and move on.

Indeed, disingenuousness, in one guise or another, is a kind of falsity which many women practise. And they are *so* surprised at your misunderstanding them, when they have acted in such a manner that you could do nothing else! What, one may ask, is the purpose of being disingenuous when it can only end in an unpleasant "show-down"? What is gained by leading a man on merely to tell him that he has formed an entirely erroneous view of your intentions and that you are astonished at his presumption? Is the momentary satisfaction worth the subsequent annoyance, or is the coquettish instinct incapable of restraint? Men do not like being thwarted, and though they may have asked for a snub, why not give it them at once, instead of emboldening them by a fraudulent acquiescence?

Innuendo, again, is a cowardly, lying method some women employ for making people feel uncomfortable. If you challenge such a woman she may protest loudly at your misconception of her remarks, but it is clear that, just because you *have* noticed them, she thinks you guilty; if you remain silent and pretend not to catch the point, you may have to endure endless pin-pricks. In any event she scores, and may thus envelop a man (or a woman) in a mephitic cloud it is almost impossible to disperse. There is a hint of blackmail about a vindictive woman which, in its mingled cruelty and cunning, can ruin a sensitive man's (or woman's) peace of mind.

One of the dangers of habitual lying it that in due course such

liars, even though they be thoughtless rather than wicked, lose their sense of proportion and become a menace. Or if not a menace to others, a menace to themselves. Women who lie as a matter of course not only despise other people, but are wary of them. They despise them because they can deceive them; they are wary of them because they know the value of their own words. Thus life for such women assumes a more intricate pattern than it need, and straightforward behaviour strikes them as either stupid or artful. It is this, I fancy, which turns many women into such hopeless pessimists. No wonder they fling themselves into extravagant gaiety, a gaiety in which they can drown the necessity to orient themselves. In losing their faith, they lose their balance.

Another danger is that they come in time to absorb their own lies and thus pass into the realm of make-believe. The so-called congenital liars may be merely people who, in order to escape from their maze, have half-persuaded themselves that the usual rules do not apply to them and that whatever they want to be true *is* true in a fashion. Such women probably act even when they are alone, and one pictures them throwing sidelong glances at their mirrors to discover whether their expression gives them away.

Some women, as some men, exaggerate habitually, thus changing the complexion of truth to suit the dramatic needs of the moment. In itself this is a mere habit and often quite unselfconscious, though it does lead to much unintentional deception and suffering. But it is probably due to the spirit of exaggeration which, in unamiable people, makes gossip such a deplorable thing, while adding to its spice. One's very idea of the word "gossip" includes a faint maliciousness, for its foundations are morbid curiosity and giggling facetiousness, and the women who are the worst gossipers dote the most on scandal.

Of course, we all like scandal up to a point and there is a certain gloomy satisfaction in hearing ill of our acquaintances; but whereas men indulge in it spasmodically, many women consider it as one of their principal recreations. Have you heard about Mrs. So-and-So?, Would you ever have believed it of Miss What's-her-Name?—how infinite are the variations played on that tune! There are, thank goodness, numbers of women who

detest the heartless element in scandal, but they are in a minority. The average woman, with the usual suspiciousness of her sex, revels in it, and though scandalous gossip about men is better than nothing, it is scandalous gossip about women which really makes her ears tingle.

Naturally, gossip becomes juicier the more often it is repeated, and the wish to believe increases, or creates, the lie. Everybody has played the game in which a story is told in a whisper from mouth to mouth, and everybody has seen how the last repetition bears but little resemblance to the original. This is gossip's career in a nutshell. What started as a statement possibly not far removed from the truth takes on, bit by bit, spiteful accretions and often finishes as a serious libel. Gossip, like a vulture, prefers its meat rancid.

That kind of lying at which boasters excel is, I am compelled to say, much commoner among men than among women. Women are too supple to fall for so crude a form of deceit and too clear-sighted to lay themselves open to humiliating charges to which there is no answer. Their realistic wisdom not only despises the momentary glow which boasting may induce, but perceives that listeners are not impressed by the self-satisfied ebullience of the braggart.

But do not let us get away from the point, which is that women have, and men have not, a sort of philosophy of lying. The naked truth is too naked for them, but even should a woman agree with you in this, she may only, in her agreement, be studying the chinks in your armour. For a woman's admissions are often no more than a clever move, and beneath one layer there opens another. Feminine lying, in its ramifications, is quite impossible to track down. It is, in fact, so finely interwoven in a woman's personality that the obvious illustrations of it I have described leave the problem almost untouched; we have reached only to the outer approaches, scarcely even to the suburbs. And yet the basic falsity may not be falsity at all, as we define the word. In the absolute meaning of femininity there may be—I expect there are—qualities, neither good nor bad, which are its ultimate differentiation from masculinity in the psychological

sphere. The spiritual vitamins, shall we say, which, though never seen, are all-powerful. Therefore, save in such gross examples as are more or less common to both sexes, we ought not, I repeat, to consider feminine duplicity as a fault. It is simply a woman's method of facing existence, just as a man's method, in the easier conditions of his being, is more direct.

But, after all, life itself is so largely a fraud, so completely a misrepresentation of what we, "the heirs of the ages," have been taught to expect, that why should we pretend that the voice of life is likely to express the truth?

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CHAPTER XXII

FEMININE INCONSISTENCY

THE emotional inconsistency of women is one of those things women themselves tend to emphasize in order to forge a weapon out of their weakness. They know that, as a class, they *are* inconsistent as inconsistency is commonly defined, but many of them deliberately flaunt this failing and, by advertising the fact that it is an inevitable part of their femininity, are able to get their way while avoiding unpleasant comment.

When a woman changes her mind overnight, she does not excuse herself to a man, but adopts the attitude that she has a perfect right to do so. No explanation is offered; rather does she have a look in her eye which expresses, with brief finality, her complete integrity. Thus the man is made to feel uncomfortable and she is saved the impossible task of synchronizing her two opinions. For, in reality, women are frequently at a loss to explain why they change their minds, although they are aware that if they were to attempt to meet a man on his own ground they would have to tender some logical reason. A woman carries things off with a high hand, partly because she feels that as a female she is entitled to, partly because she knows that she could never make herself clear to a man, and partly because, despite it all, she experiences a slight sense of embarrassment.

It is complications such as this which increase so much the difficulty of following women's motives. To say that women are inconsistent because they are feminine does not get one very far; but sometimes one is reduced to such evasive simplification, not alone because the instinct is itself obscure, but because it is overlaid by so many extraneous influences. Women understand their own limitations, and they have cleverly developed a whole technique whereby they can not only indulge their temperaments without exciting criticism, but actually induce men to do more for them through a display of unreason.

I call it "evasive simplification" to say that a woman is inconsistent because she is a female, for surely one can carry the argument a step farther than that; but nevertheless it is also true that there is a region of femininity quite beyond analysis and that one finally comes up against this in any discussion about women. But, after all, in philosophy one finally comes up against the insoluble problem of life, though this does not prevent more or less fruitful speculation. If one chooses to abandon the effort by stating that "women are women and that's the end of it," it is a feasible position to adopt, but I think one can be a little more helpful. At least, I hope so. Therefore let us try to search for causes, however short they fall of the ultimate one.

It is no use endeavouring to pin a woman down to her former utterances or her previous conduct. In truth, only very ignorant people would make the attempt. And yet, in changing as they do, in breaking their word and ignoring their promises, women are invariably able to put the blame on others and to behave as if it were they alone who had been injured. But apart from the fact that they have a tortuous logic of their own which allows them to twist everything to their advantage, the kind of logic that makes twice one a different sort of two from what a man makes it, men seldom appreciate that, when *their* feelings are deeply stirred, they also, as a rule, see only one side of the question. Possibly the real two is something unknown to either of them. In those many cases where men and women accuse one another of bad treatment, influences have usually been at work which the outsider cannot estimate and which, in all their ramifications, are hidden from the couple concerned. It is vain to expect a rigid consistency, and perhaps undesirable—who would trust a statesman who had never varied an opinion and whose policy was immutable?—but without ignoring their background or pretending that anyone is infallible, we are concerned here with the everyday results of inconsistency as practised by women—and inconsistency is, in all respects, much more an abiding trait in women than in men.

When discussing women's unreliability in general terms, one feels that, because its existence is admitted, one should be able

to cope with any manifestation of it. But, of course, the general and the particular are totally different, and when it comes to action a woman is apt to be inconsistent in such odd ways and at such unexpected moments that one is well-nigh stunned. A man likes to know where he stands, but a woman can comport herself so incomprehensibly, taking for granted the while either that she has his sympathy or that his is the sole responsibility, as to make him uncertain whether he is on his head or his heels.

I admit that inconsistency on the part of a woman is frequently only a sign of altered feelings and that when, let us say, a girl who has been only too delighted to arrange surreptitious meetings with a youth begins to express qualms as to what her aunt would think about it did she know, the origin of the inconsistency is clear enough. As some French writer has said, there are always embarrassing periods both at the beginning and at the end of love; but though at the beginning men are perhaps less embarrassed than women, at the close women are certainly *much* less embarrassed than men. Once a woman falls out of love, she makes but few and feeble efforts to conceal it. If, for example, the youth remarks that last week she did not care in the slightest what her aunt would think, he will no longer be left in doubt as to the girl's real feelings. The hint which is not taken leads rapidly to scarifying frankness.

Talking of the sex relationship in one of its many phases, I would add that the inability of women to decide whether they wish to marry the men who wish to marry them, and their capacity for shilly-shallying and for upsetting the equilibrium of their swains, have caused more annoyance and raised more laughter than almost any other feminine characteristic. Indeed, it has been a byword for centuries. But I must say I think it is rather hard luck on them. To begin with, no girl wants to be "rushed" about a thing like marriage; secondly, girls, like the lady in Byron's *Don Juan*—

A little while she strove, and much repented,
And whispering, "I will ne'er consent"—consented—

are educated to be coy, and would be in any case; and, thirdly, it is not always remembered that *before* young men propose they

have presumably worked out their side of the problem and know what they want. And though it is conventionally easier for a girl to break off an engagement than it is for a man, it is not only girls who break them off, any more than it is only women who feel that they have gone too far to draw back.

Admittedly, many girls do make the running, and most girls, however passive, know when a proposal is a likelihood; but they are not always given time to come to a decision in their own hearts, and anyhow, the reality, however clearly visualized, has inevitably some quality of shock. I am not denying that women are often inconsistent in this as in other matters, but I doubt whether they are more inconsistent than men. In the very temptation to embark upon an unknown venture there is bound to be an instinctive movement of caution and withdrawal.

Enamoured youths are constantly trying to corner girls and sweep them off their feet. And girls, who are not at all immune from flattery and think it charming to be compared with all the beauties of antiquity and all the romance of the ages, may react temporarily with a kind of spurious emotion which means less than nothing. That is only one tiny example of the sort of thing which happens and which sooner or later leads to a revulsion. There is illusive love just as there is cat's ice: both yield to the faintest pressure. Naturally, large numbers of women are fickle and changeable; but so are large numbers of men. When sex comes directly into play, slanging matches and opprobrious comparisons are beside the point.

Allowing for innumerable exceptions, it is probably correct to say that the average woman is less sensitive to the feelings of others than is the average man. Perhaps this is only to be expected, for while a man has to ingratiate himself in business, a woman has to fight her battles in a social world of no give and take. But, whatever be the cause, it may help to account for the indifference she displays as to the result of her inconsistencies. The old saying that the wise man never explains and never apologizes applies more to women than to men, and as long as a woman gets what she is after, she is more or less hardened against the bewilderment or dismay this may arouse. And she positively

will not stand for post-mortems on her conduct, although she is very ready to remind men of their shortcomings and to recall germane instances going back for years.

Even the women from whom one would least expect it are at times curiously inconsiderate and lacking in imagination. They fail a man just when a word or a line would mean such a lot. I agree that this is often the result of shyness, but it is more often the result of thoughtlessness. They simply do not envisage other people's feelings and, being content in themselves, suppose that everybody else is satisfied.

Women are frightened of exciting false hopes, and much of their apparent inconsistency and inconsiderateness may be regarded as a defence against the implications men put upon their speech and their acts. They have to walk with ceaseless circumspection, and therefore they find most useful the latitude which has been granted them as women. After all, men are always telling one another that women are not to be trusted, and if this be so they should take them less seriously. But it frequently happens that women, accused by men of changing their minds, have done nothing of the sort ; it is the men who have ridiculously misunderstood them. But many a man would rather think that women had been living up to their reputation than that they, the men, had made fools of themselves. The first is a lesser humiliation than the second.

When women submit to their feminine promptings and throw everything out of gear through their inconsistent behaviour they are often only expressing their eternal dissatisfaction with things as they are. Such inconsistency is but a reaching out for the unattainable, a longing to escape from fatuity into peace. It is not they who are inconsistent, they would plead, it is men who let them down and life which is pointless. There is a layer of pessimism in most women, and when they act in an incomprehensible manner it is, as often as not, more a gesture against fate than anything else.

Sometimes it is impossible to be sure whether a woman's inconsistency is intentional or unselfconscious. Her marvellous gift for forgetting what she wants to forget may strike an observer

as an excessively skilful piece of acting, but I suspect that she has been conveniently forgetting for so many generations that she really can forget whenever it suits her, just as some people can sleep whenever they have five minutes to spare. Richard Aldington says in *The Colonel's Daughter*, "Forgetting is woman's first and greatest art," and I am rather inclined to agree with him. She can forget facts, she can forget emotions—she can, in short, forget everything in the past which might trouble her thoughts or interfere with her present.

Of course, men also have convenient memories, but they cannot give such brilliant exhibitions of astonished innocence. A woman, as it were, irons her past right out of her, and her callousness, when confronted by reminders, shows to what an extent her spirit may die and be born again. It has to be noted that many emotional women are neurotic, and that neurotic women who have been through too much lose all their feelings. Thus those trying instances of inconsistency and changeableness are, often enough, but the result of defeated hopes. If the neurotic woman cannot attain her goal she is liable to fly off the handle into a nervous breakdown and from the nervous breakdown into a frigid unconcern. She is unable to control herself, and indeed the cycle is well recognized.

Men debate women's inconsistency too generally in terms of their own psychology. But while women grant that men are more stolid than they and less likely to be the victims of their nerves, yet they do not particularly admire men's characters and do not consider they have any right to pass judgment on theirs. A woman acts as she does, however queer it may seem to a man, because she is compelled to do so by something within her, and if men insist on explanations, so much the blinder they.

This attitude, as I suggested before, may go hand in glove in her mind with a resolve to accentuate, for her own purposes, the very thing in herself which it annoys her to know that men despair of. Though women are not always aware of their mental processes, nevertheless the conflict of the sexes is ceaselessly at work to befuddle and elaborate them. A woman may be

utterly apathetic about a man, but because he is a male she cannot help, to however small a degree, playing up the female.

And to be inconsistent when least expected, not obviously but intangibly, is part of her awakened femininity. It is, so to speak, the first move in a time-honoured ritual which, in its subtler phases, is quite outside individual volition. No matter how sincere a woman may be, there is an instinct in her to ward off men by enveloping her personality in a sort of foiling atmosphere. She has to be true to herself without giving herself away, and thus she is always ready to double on her tracks.

But through all this foiling atmosphere of her own creation, an atmosphere so foiling, indeed, that she cannot bring herself to enlighten the man who is too dense to take hints, there runs the longing for the right word at the right moment. If men but guessed how often in the middle of what seems to them a promising conversation, leading up, they fondly hope, to an intimate adventure, the woman is thinking, "Oh, if only he wouldn't spoil everything by being so obvious!", or "Can't he see that he's going about it the wrong way?", they would feel decidedly deflated instead of being, as they so often are, astounded finally at her obtuseness or her obstinacy. Everything can be ruined for a woman by a word or a look too much or too little, and her obliqueness, in her judgment, is only an answer to man's crudity.

Throughout literature one finds famous writers dwelling on the inconsistency of womanhood and presenting women to us who are overwhelmingly convincing because they are completely feminine. Whether one studies the delicious irrelevancies of Mrs. Nickleby or the tragic moods of Nastasya Philipovna, one feels that their *aliveness* has been helped by what, on the surface, one may call their inconsequence. The first figure may be a caricature and the second may be insane, but both Dickens and Dostoievsky—among many others—were able to breathe life into their women by endowing them with the incalculable factor of the unexpected.

Because women can be such inspiring and intelligent companions, men are apt to forget that there are unbridgeable mental differences between them. That is why women can, every

now and again, astonish men so much, whereas men ought to realize that the actions causing this astonishment are not strange at all but entirely natural. And naturally women discover the same difficulty with men. Thus it comes about that they keep moving round one another and, even in their mutual efforts to understand, eluding one another. If women seem very inconsistent to men, men seem very thick-headed to women. But the truth is that they do not invariably think along parallel lines.

And so feminine inconsistency—that inconsistency beyond man's and of a different quality—must be accepted as a feminine sign-post, there from the beginning and constantly refurbished. But where feminine sign-posts lead a man is one of those questions to which there are many and diverse answers.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE POSSESSIVE INSTINCT

No one would deny that the possessive instinct, with its offspring, jealousy, and jealousy's numerous progeny, such as misunderstanding, spleen, misery and hate, is common to both men and women and one of the most primitive and pervasive of sex impulses. And yet, because women are more tied in their lives than men and because they concentrate more intensely on their aims, I think I am not exaggerating if I say that possessiveness—a possessiveness which year by year tightens its stifling clutch—is more widely noticeable in women than in men.

It is one of the ironies of existence that love, with its lofty dreams and its capacity for self-sacrifice, hides in its heart the germs of almost every evil passion. The yearning to possess wholly what one adores is bound up with reciprocity, and if the reciprocity is not complete, though it may be checked merely by the emotional pressure on it, from that very yearning will spring reactions which are the negation of beauty and happiness. Long, long ago it was written that while love was as strong as death, jealousy was as cruel as the grave, and, phrasing it less poetically, who can doubt that possessiveness, the parent of jealousy, does often destroy the nobler feelings?

Women are, in some directions, so sure of themselves that when they find their dominion over a man diminishing, they experience not only dismay, but rage. Nobody can be more vindictive than a middle-aged wife who has been supplanted in her husband's affections, and the scenes she makes are not alone a sign of her despair but of her thwarted possessiveness. When a woman, as so often happens, will not divorce a husband who wants to be divorced, there is almost invariably something of the dog-in-the-manger about her decision. She may justly argue that a divorce will lower her status and imperil her income, but behind

all that there is the conviction that her husband belongs to her alone and the resolve that no other woman shall poach unopposed on her preserves.

A domineering woman who has been shamed in her own eyes is at once implacable and forlorn. In the shattering of her illusions wrath goes hand in hand with wretchedness, and, unable to admit that she has been in any way to blame, she heaps abuse upon the very person to whom she has hitherto devoted her unselfish energies. And one sees her point of view: she *has* done everything she can, she *has* endeavoured with all her might to be a perfect wife. Why should she be so affronted?

Jealousy can survive affection, and just as a householder would object to a thief stealing whatever belongs to him, whether he values it or not, so a woman objects to another woman stealing her husband, even if she has ceased to care for him in the slightest. He is her property as much as any of her effects, and if she cannot sway him to her wishes, as she did once, there is still the legal tie.

It is no use arguing with a woman who adopts this attitude. She is impervious to the logic of events because she knows that her rights are secure, and these rights are a portion of her general assets. Her sense of grievance swamps everything else, and though she may be kind and indulgent to other people, she is adamant to the one person about whom, one might suppose, she ought to be magnanimous. A look of indignant surprise or injured innocence would be her only response to the suggestion that she has perhaps been too possessive.

Of course, a great many women are not like this—in some, tenderness always outweighs bitterness; in others, total indifference soon supervenes—but, then, a great many are. But maybe we all have our blind spots, often less defensible ones than those of the woman whose possessive instinct has been outraged, and one of the perennially disconcerting things is to discover that, in the midst of an amicable talk, one has suddenly touched upon the blind spot of somebody who appeared to be the embodiment of reasonableness. The vacant stare or the inane answer greets one's apparently sensible remarks, and all that is left to one is to

change immediately the trend of the conversation. For—who knows?—perhaps the blind spot is in oneself.

The average man has a certain, if not a marked, capacity for compromise in his judgments, even when it is to his disadvantage, but the average woman is so ruled by her feelings that the rights and wrongs of any problem depend entirely on her own opinions about it. Gay, in *The Beggar's Opera*, observes, "A jealous woman believes everything her passion suggests"; and if that be so, as I believe, it shows how hard it is for a woman to admit that there are two sides to every question. So hard, indeed, that she seldom does admit it. It is always perplexing to come up against the dogmatism of a woman in such circumstances; she is so calmly sure her view is correct that there is simply no ground for discussion.

Perplexing and irritating. Yet unless one sees how essentially personal, in a purely feminine manner, women are in their approach to people and problems, one will never begin to understand their logic and judge them as they really are and not as, in our ignorance we may argue, they ought to be. And one must bear in mind that a woman's opinions are not only very personal, relying on preconceptions and intuitions as much as upon observation, but, because she is an extremist, very arbitrary. But as women are also signally realistic, they are frequently, within their range, as clear-visioned as eagles. Thus, at one and the same moment, we may be aghast at their wrong-headedness and delighted by their common sense.

A woman, should she ever admit to being possessive, is quite able to defend her position by arguments which, from her angle, are conclusive and irrefutable. What would happen to her husband if she did not direct his steps? How could she feel affection for a man without wanting to advise and shield him? All quite true, and yet, because she does not properly grasp the soul of man, perhaps all quite useless. Men require just as careful handling as women, but that not being recognized in the social convention, they do not always receive it. Hence the possessiveness which, in our civilized era, is meant to be a help frequently turns out to be a hindrance.

The possessive instinct, allied though it be to the sheltering emotion which love creates, too often declines into a form of tyranny, and a well-meaning, possessive woman is capable of absorbing the vitality of those she cherishes after the manner of a spider absorbing the blood of its victims. The mother who insists on supervising her daughter's every activity, the wife who encompasses her husband like a living shawl, may both, in their conscious wish to aid and their unconscious wish to command, build brick by brick a stubborn wall of opposition. In the long run everyone resents being dictated to, and affection applied with too lavish a zeal can become as stultifying as hatred.

But the possessive woman is so full of good intentions, and so easily offended if her dupes resist her submerging claims, that not many of them dare to revolt openly. Most people acknowledge that they have to surrender, at least outwardly, some portion of their freedom, but women cling tenaciously to the belief that *they* are doing all the surrendering. In other words, a possessive woman is just as sure of her unselfishness as is a really unselfish woman. It is like two people in a bed: though one be much the more comfortable, each is persuaded that the other has procured the snuggest corner and practically all of the blankets.

Marriage is undoubtedly the testing-ground of the possessive spirit. It is only reasonable that this relationship should be hedged about, not alone by legal bonds, not alone even by a mutual sense of fair play and obligation, but by those cementing instincts, including possessiveness, through which alone lasting marriage has been evolved. But just as legal bonds can be broken and fair play cease to function, so can instincts run riot and, from being beneficial, degenerate into intolerable millstones. There can exist a cancer of the spirit as of the body.

The law endeavours to harness all the mysterious implications of sex, and human beings as a rule play their difficult part with a sense of responsibility; but underneath there flows "the stream of life, profound and unfrozen," and none of us can be certain when our passions may not get beyond our control. As night follows day, jealousy follows unfaithfulness, and the possessive heart, injured in its recesses, turns to gall and wormwood.

It may well be that possessiveness in a woman is one of the various methods her psychology has developed to keep men true to her. If she does so much for her man, if she invests him with sleepless attentions and guards his every hour, surely he must come to find her indispensable! (Women, in the same way as men, can be fearfully dense in their efforts to rationalize actions.) But women, if sceptical about men as a body, can persuade themselves that their husbands are completely under their thumbs, and the possessive feelings they have for them, though originating perhaps in something quite different, are in fact a sign of their trust and affection. And this is why deception appears to those many women who are not philosophers such a base sin.

A yoke is pleasant just so long as it is shared equally, and I do not deny that many a husband is as happily possessive about his wife as she is about him. Nor do I deny that, if anything goes wrong, a husband's jealousy can be as overpowering as his wife's. But I do not think that the average husband wants to monopolize his wife to the extent so many wives want to monopolize their husbands. As I have pointed out in another chapter, a young wife may even be jealous of her husband's old friends, and it is probably true that in most marriages it is the wife's relations who see more of the couple than the husband's. The old gibe about "marrying the family" refers invariably to the wife's family, and of a dozen mothers-in-law who make trouble, perhaps ten are mothers of the wives.

As a man is scarcely aware of his liver or his lungs until something upsets their working, so his wife's possessiveness may seem to be only a charming access of consideration until there is a conflict of wills on some more or less momentous point. Indeed, because sensible women know how to govern without intrusion, it frequently happens that when a man is being carefully led he thinks his word is law and that here at last is a woman who respects him. Men's shackles grow upon them insensibly and the husband who, in his opinion, is master in his own house is often little better than the mouthpiece of his wife.

While most wives feel it a duty to mould their husbands to their code, the possessiveness of some women is not at all of the

aggressive type. There are mild and humble women who would never dream of asserting themselves or opposing their husbands, but who yet feel, in their subdued souls, wholly possessive about them. Such women are slaves to their vows and, badly as their husbands may treat them, never lose that adoring leniency which is the form their possessiveness takes. Men are to be envied who have such wives ; at least, theoretically envied, for human nature is so queer that they seldom appreciate them. Submissiveness in either man or woman is only too liable to excite victimization.

The future of their sex is one of those subjects on which women love to descant, and that is very natural ; but I am inclined to think that their possessive instinct is so deep-rooted and so personal that they will never, as a class, want to play a large part in general affairs. It is quite true that, as Dryden makes the knight say to the court of women in his adaptation of *The Wife of Bath*, "What all your sex desire is sovereignty" ; but it is sovereignty over specific individuals. Of course, a minority of women will concern themselves increasingly with social and political questions, but I dare to think that most women will continue, as before, to aim at governance in their homes and influence in their circles.

And they will do so, as they do now, with the feeling that, though every man's hand be against them, they can bring it off. They are annoyed at the difficulties which revolve round them, but they are convinced it is inevitable that they should so revolve ; they are the centres of disturbance because they are the wielders of patronage. Many men are affected by a similar blend of emotions ; their natural pessimism suggests that they are sure to be the attractors of bad luck, but their natural optimism suggests that they will somehow come out on top. Women, in like manner, know that they are born to worry, but in their very weakness they also know themselves invincible.

It is not alone in sex relations that possessiveness and jealousy can play havoc ; the same thing may be observed in friendship. It is sometimes foolhardy to become too friendly with a friend's friends, because when that happens, there being no shadow of a legitimate cause for grievance, an antagonism may result which is

peculiarly embittered. Many people, indeed, prefer to keep their particular friends apart and to treat them as if they were their private property. This, admittedly, is sometimes a reasonable precaution, for one may feel positive that certain persons would not mix well; but sometimes it is a selfish precaution, for one may fear that they might mix only too well. Possessiveness is full of guile.

And full of folly. People always find their level, just as water does, and in friendship there are very few cases of an affinity so complete that it does not require a constant exercise of patience and tact. No doubt it is provoking to discover that our best friends—those friends who bring something superior and enviable into our lives—have come to prefer others to ourselves; but if only people would appreciate that a hurt manner is about the most alienating thing in the world and that they have no right to feel a possessive claim on anyone, they would exercise a juster sense of proportion. We may not be responsible for our intelligence or personality, but we can assuredly avoid the social, self-destructive crime of boring those for whom we care and of exhibiting resentment because they have drifted away from us. And yet it is very common, and women especially, who after a time find it harder than men to form new close friendships, are apt to show their claws when their possessiveness has received a rebuff and their jealousy been awakened.

About inanimate things, curiously enough, women are not nearly so possessive as men. They may be devoted to their jewellery and their clothes, but it is less a personal than an artistic devotion. They are valuable to them in proportion as they heighten their attractiveness and make them stand out from other women. This, I dare say, is too sweeping a statement in some respects, for women can have a sentimental love for objects they have known all their lives, but few of them have that passion for collecting books or prints or stamps or an infinity of other objects which engrosses so many men to the exclusion of every other interest. Women, in truth, far from sharing such enthusiasms, often regard their husbands' hobbies as rather imbecile, although, if they do not cost too much, they have an indulgent eye for them, as saving men from worse mischief.

It is, let me repeat, about people that women are so possessive ; and one may wonder why it is that though they are, in the ordinary course, far-sighted, they so often allow their possessive impulses to ruin the careful structure of their peace. The explanation, it seems to me, reduces itself to this, that possessiveness, in its very nature, is an obscure conglomeration of instincts. It is a mingling of the instincts of sex, protection, pride, affection itself. In brief, it is the product of so many instincts that the normal woman can neither escape from possessiveness nor be sure of handling it gracefully.

And yet the happiness of all those with whom she is allied does depend on its existence, always provided that that existence be kept dark. The word, once spoken, has an odious suggestion and upsets people. For a woman to be possessive is to have somebody to live for ; for a woman to be over-possessive is to undermine her influence.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE UNCREATIVENESS OF WOMEN

To assert that women are uncreative may sound like a contradiction in terms, for it is obvious that they are, in an impressive sense, the most creative of all God's creatures. But, apart from the fact that people frequently disregard what they can do well and yearn to do well what they cannot do at all, it is reasonable that women should claim to be judged by their intellectual, and not by their instinctive, capacities. And so let us judge them.

The usual feminine argument to account for women's backwardness in the arts is that they were kept under for centuries, inadequately educated, and not permitted to express themselves. Giving all due allowance to the accuracy of these statements, why is it we find that genius, which is subject to none of the ordinary rules or disabilities, is so rare among women? Take the nineteenth century—a rich, blossoming period in which women, and especially perhaps English women, were much to the fore—and what do we see? A handful of remarkable writers—Jane Austen, the Brontës, E. B. Browning, George Eliot, Christina Rossetti, to name an English list one knows so well, whether one adds to or subtracts from it; not a single first-class painter, not a single first-rate composer.

Are we really asked to believe that this failure is fundamentally due to man's overweening dominance, or may it not be the case that woman's creative energy is so powerfully concentrated on her natural mission, so close to the source of life itself, that, with scanty exceptions, the creation of the spirit has been denied her? In other words, may not the reason be physiological? Possibly it is a mere coincidence that, from one cause or another, all the women I have just mentioned left but one living child between them; but show me the woman who has succeeded triumphantly

—I am not talking of mediocre women writers, who are frequently very prolific in both directions—in the double act of creation!

While women's theories about their failure to produce masterpieces are incapable of exact refutation, one is surely entitled to judge by what is evident. For long years now they have had the same advantages as men in preparing for an artistic career, but where are the figures who stand out like signposts? Katherine Mansfield, Virginia Woolf, Stella Benson, "Elizabeth" (Lady Russell), to mention four contemporary writers now, alas, dead, were gifted in abundance, and such names could be matched among the living, but where is the promise of immortality, where is the *greatness*? Even the most remarkable female novelists seem to concentrate on petty themes or, conversely, to make all themes petty, as if their vision were hopelessly circumscribed by their sex. The general level of accomplishment has, of course, risen in women, as it has in men, but I suggest that this is only due to the spread of culture and self-criticism.

It is easy to say that women must be given a few hundred years before they are mentally rid of their inherited shackles. Conceivably this may be true—anything may be true by then—but what we know points, unfortunately, to the fact that it is not the memory of their shackles which keeps them back, but something inherent in the nature of their minds.

Indeed, if women are going to argue about the splendour of their future status, why should not men respond with a few words about the justness of their former status? When women assure us that they will be as creative as men when they are really free, men may reasonably answer that the condition of society which existed for thousands of years was possibly due to the inborn wisdom of the race. Women's position of old was not so much inferior, in the accepted meaning, as different, and if they did not have the chances to compete with men they now possess it was because they had, as men had, their own special niche and their own special work.

No one blames women for not being creative in the masculine sense; the trouble is that women will not accept the obvious, but are for ever explaining it away. But their case is weak.

Women, for example, have been playing musical instruments for as long a time as men and it is probable that more girls than boys learn the piano and the violin, yet the star performers are invariably men. How is that to be accounted for? It has nothing to do with lack of training or insufficient physical endurance or false modesty or incapacity for emotion. No, it is bound up with that incalculable "little more and how much it is" which men appear to possess and women appear not to possess.

I agree that some actresses are as outstanding as any actors, but acting is as much a question of personality as of talent, and women are perhaps more histrionic than men. Many women, through an obscure instinct of self-preservation, go through life assuming a part, and nobody would deny them marvellous gifts in that direction. Thus the art of acting may be said to come readily to a woman, and if, added to that, she has good looks and the unanalysable asset of personality, she is likely to be a success on the stage.

Indeed, where natural genius is in question women come into their own. A woman's face or a woman's voice can be indescribably moving, not only to her beloved but to all humanity. Moreover, she can have the grace of a gazelle and charm enough to melt the heart of an ogre. These are the gifts of the gods as surely as are the gifts to compose a ringing sonnet or a lofty sonata, but I cannot see why women should claim to be dowered with everything. Men might just as well aver that if they wanted to sing treble, they could.

A woman's desire to shine socially is often, in its ramifications, an effort to assert herself and thus build a unique atmosphere. But her bid for originality is too frequently a mere striving after effect, and just as one does not become an artist by wearing a flabby tie or a wideawake hat, so one does not create anything by being bizarre. The Bright Young Things, who every year used to startle London by their novelties, were actually arid in their lack of imagination, and even the talk of clever women tends, in its very essence, to be amusing rather than profound. The high intelligence of many women, their quickness in the uptake, and their fund of information are apt to mislead one as to their inven-

tive capacity, and when carried away by momentary enthusiasm for their intellect it is as well to recall Voltaire's words in his *Dictionnaire Philosophique*: "Very learned women are to be found, in the same manner as female warriors; but they are seldom or never inventors."

Innumerable women are witty in a somewhat brittle, devastating style, for the sting in the tail is what they enjoy, but few women are humorous. That, in a sense, denotes their limitations, for wit is a destructive weapon, whereas humour, in the hands of a master, can develop a constructive idea. I do not want to over-stress this, as, in given instances, one could argue it back and forth interminably, but I do feel that it conveys a general truth.

Yes, enchanting though she may be as a conversationalist, and cleverer perhaps than ninety-nine men out of a hundred, it is the rarest thing to find a woman who can impress one deeply by her talk. It can be informed and brilliant, it can cover all the inflections from gaiety to indignation, it can express adorably or adorably conceal her elusive self, but there is little of that constructiveness or eloquence about it which make the conversation of some men hold one spellbound.

In saying this I imply nothing derogatory. A woman can be as good a companion as a man, she can furnish lively pleasure by the vitality of her remarks, but she seldom carries one away by the subtlety of her observations, though she does sometimes surprise one by the clarity of her insight. (But clarity is static, not creative.) Women take the colour of those they admire, but they are not original thinkers. This is almost more evident among those one may still call "Blue Stockings" than among the flippant. A flippant woman may divert one by the cynicism and agility of her mind, but a solemn woman is liable to be a frightful bore. And this is not merely because one does not want a woman to be too solemn, but because feminine solemnity is so concentrated and so barren; the extremism of women is always peeping out. Of course, there are women who are both feminine and erudite, but one usually feels that their femininity is slightly forced, as if they *had* to be feminine, and that their true interests lie elsewhere.

As critics of life women display astuteness, though they are generally too biased—as indeed are many men—to see things whole. They often put their finger on the weak spot, but their judgment is so swayed by personalities that their vision gets blurred and they rush to dogmatism. This is what makes women such unreliable witnesses, and this is why their evidence invariably calls for corroboration. The working of their minds follows no recognized formula, and in order to score, or stress, a point they will, all-unknowingly, fly off at tangents which have nothing whatsoever to do with the case in hand. Their brains, even in such small matters, are not logical, and this perhaps explains why there are no great female philosophers or mathematicians. Not a single one.

Though women may not be artistically creative, as art critics they are frequently almost impeccable. But it must be admitted that the reasons they adduce for their likes or dislikes might not invariably appeal to a man. However trained a woman's taste, however sound her reactions, she is inclined to jump to conclusions which are not warranted. Her mental processes, acute as they often are, are intricately allied to her feminine preconceptions.

Even in some of women's own typical employments the first-rate performers are men and not women. The finest cooks are men; the most fashionable dress-designers are men. The old argument of being kept under cannot apply here, for these are activities which women have practised assiduously for centuries. Yet when the last word of creative imagination is called for, it is men, and men only, who take the lead. It is useless to say that this is all due to unjust prejudice, for women, as men, prefer the best and will get it if they can (though few women understand much about wine and not many are gourmets), and therefore it is scarcely a case of instinctive feminine bias. No, despite a certain amount of snobbishness, the truth is this: men perceive a range of possibilities women overlook.

Women are excellent craftsmen in many directions, but they lack that final touch which differentiates talent from genius. I agree that they can master numerous things which men seldom attempt to master, but do any of these accomplishments require

the stateliest gifts? Is there one thing in which women alone shine that is, in itself, capable of treatment in the grand manner?

Admittedly, women can work miracles through their sex, not only in the creation of children, but in giving men the most thrilling of all emotions, the emotion of ecstasy and bliss. But men also help to create the children and women also fall in love. These are the mere processes of nature and, as such, have nothing to do with intelligence, although, as I suggested before, they are great natural gifts. The fact is that as soon as one tries to rationalize love, one begins to flounder. The song the sirens sang may have been the music of the spheres, but it would not astonish me to learn that the sirens had the mentality of rabbits. Thus the supreme happiness women can bring to men is a thing apart, and the web they spin about our hearts is as instinctive as the growth of a rose. They can arouse an emotion of infinite beauty, but is it not more an illusion than a creation?

Of recent years women have entered vigorously into many of men's activities, but though they have acquitted themselves with credit, with few exceptions they have not attained eminence. Where are the outstanding women doctors, engineers or barristers? They can pass the examinations all right, they can grasp the technique of their subjects as adequately as can men, but they remain pedestrian. (So of course do most men, but that is not the point; I am discussing the exceptions.) True, their number is limited, but as it is usually only the cleverest women who enter the professions, might not some of them have made a bigger mark by now? But there, again, it is something in themselves, something to do with the mysterious alembic of their sex, which keeps them down.

Women laugh at men's romanticism, but it is probably just this masculine romanticism, in one of its manifestations, which allows a man to soar where a woman can do no better than trot. And may this not be the reason why the most exalted forms of writing, the tragic and the lyric, are practically beyond women? And yet, of all the arts, it is writing at which women are most adept. They are beautifully equipped (the real writers) to present situations in which the play of character is as delicate as the

lights and shadows of a spring morning, but how often do they touch the depths or scale the heavens? I am afraid one can only answer, Very seldom. It is cherry-stone carving at which they excel, and perhaps Lawrence of Arabia was not so far out, though unnecessarily blunt, when he wrote in a letter to Sir Sydney Cockerell, given in *The Letters of T. E. Lawrence* edited by David Garnett: "All the women who ever wrote original stuff could have been strangled at birth and the history of English literature (and my bookshelves) would be unchanged."

It would be provocative to dissect this theory about romance and discover, if one could, whether it *is* in the romantic nature of man that the kernel of his creativeness lies. Provocative and perhaps illuminating. But it is all too theoretical for accurate deductions. There must be some radical reason why women are so infinitely less creative than men, but though I am convinced that it is entirely bound up with sex, the precise unmasking of cause and effect is beyond me.

Many clever and many learned women have flourished during the last few decades, and in scholarship and research they are recognized as tireless workers, but few discoveries of theirs have startled the world. It seems to me, indeed, that where science is concerned it is only in such subjects as history and anthropology—subjects which call for an imaginative treatment of facts but not for pure imagination—that women are going to compete strongly with men. But even in these fields have they the stamina to produce those vast, co-ordinated books men have produced?

But this may be too broad a generalization and my knowledge may well be imperfect. Yet, including art, apart from literature, what women have earned real fame within recent, or comparatively recent, times? In different branches of activity one thinks of a Rosa Bonheur, a Margaret Fuller, a Florence Nightingale, a Josephine Butler, a Madame Curie, a Dr. Garrett Anderson, an Ethel Smyth, a Beatrice Webb, a Signora Montessori; but the very fact that one has to go digging about for exceptions proves—does it not?—how vacant is the ground. For the name of one distinguished woman, the names of fifty distinguished men could be offered. The general range

of talent is perhaps as high among women as among men, but beyond a certain point women are hardly in the picture. And even when they are, they are practically never in the front row.

Let us face the matter squarely: the basic uncreativity of women is shown, not alone by the few exceptions to the rule, but by the quality of most of those very exceptions.

CHAPTER XXV

WOMEN AND MONEY

SPEAKING generally, the attitude of women towards money may be said to differ fundamentally from the attitude of men. This is not immediately obvious, for the simple reason that women constantly have to spend money for the same purposes as men have to spend it; but the more closely one has to do with any individual woman, the more clearly one perceives its truth. The difference arises, I think, partly because it is, in the main, men who create wealth and have the governance of property, and partly because the feminine mind, in determining everything from its own particular bent, has not made money an exception to this rule. If in money matters men are bold and women are careful, may it not be traced very largely to the fact that men are enterprising and women are conservative?

Admittedly, women seldom get the chance of being anything else with money, but even when they do get it they hardly ever avail themselves of it. Speculation, which may be regarded as an offshoot of romanticism, though it frequently bears the mark of rapacity, is almost entirely carried on by men; when a woman wants to accumulate capital she saves. In this respect she has far more self-control than men, and many a woman, out of a small income or tiny allowance, builds up a nest-egg which a man, in similar conditions, would never have the strength of will to acquire. If she has some aim in view, a woman can do without things much more tenaciously than a man.

Few women have that sort of sacred feeling about money which is so common with men, though a good many women are scared at their relationship to it. A sensible man, while distinguishing sharply between capital and income, is not averse to spending capital when necessary; but women, to whom money is often a mystery but is never mystical, regard such a distinction either as

man-made nonsense or as something so immutable that they would rather starve than sacrifice a pound of capital. The average girl assumes that she will marry a man who can support her, and though, while she is single, she may subsist on her slender earnings with meticulous care and undergo privations rather than run into debt, yet once she is married she is just as ready to be wildly extravagant if she is in a position to be so.

It is not that women are, on the whole, more mercenary than men, but that they take it for granted that if their husbands have the knack of making money, they, the wives, should have the privilege of spending it. The whole thing is founded on a convention, and for married women and unmarried alike there is a code of the permissible and the impermissible which is not, in its essence, based upon abstract ideas of right and wrong. Few men like the thought of living on their wives' fortunes, but many women, who may be excellent in other respects, have no consideration for their husbands' pockets. And an unmarried woman, who would be affronted at one kind of gift from a male friend, will accept, with easy conscience, another kind of gift which may actually have cost much more. What constitutes the keeping or the losing of self-respect may be as difficult to define as, on occasion, is the dividing line between amateurism and professionalism in sport. But those differences, imaginary as they are, are exceedingly real and significant to most women, and it needs a very well-bred member of the sex—well-bred in a sense that may have nothing to do with birth—to recognize how hollow it all is and to be at once natural and dignified.

Truly, love, and all that love implies, is much more important to almost every woman than is money, and I do not at all agree with Gray's rhetorical question in his poem, *On the Death of a Favourite Cat*, "What female heart can gold despise?" The answer, in my opinion, is: Most female hearts. For, in a way, women are very unworldly about money, and oddly enough the fact that they will disregard wealth to marry poverty is no more forcible a proof of this than the fact that, if they do marry wealth, they will probably make the money fly. If it be not there, they manage adequately without it; if it be there, they spend it with

that unaffected delight which proves how little of a fetish it is to them.

Especially is this the case if, as of course often happens, a woman, from one of those many feminine terrors that seize upon her from time to time, does marry a rich man as an escape. Then the very thing for which she marries is the very thing she despises, and the underlying cynicism of her nature makes her quite ready to dissipate the source of her comfort. There is an unscrupulous vein in many women which enables them to charge up all their own unfairness against the unfairness of fate and to evade their finer responsibilities by arguing that they are always being forced into false positions.

I am not thinking about the better woman's reaction to money if I say that numbers of women are so outrageously extravagant that they seem, in their weakness, to epitomize everything one visualizes as detestable in female self-indulgence and folly. Undoubtedly there are plenty of men who are equally extravagant and whose efforts are directed to living on their own wits and other people's bank balances; but it must be remembered that, reprehensible and obnoxious as they are, they are seldom extravagant at the expense of a spouse to whom they have sworn loyalty. That, more through chance than through any merit in men, appears to be a female prerogative. But the extravagant woman loses all sense of pride and responsibility and, regardless of the day of reckoning, stoops to any lie or subterfuge to gratify a vice which, in its invariable progress, carries ruin and shame in its wake.

The reverse of this picture is the quiet courage with which many women who are hard-up, but self-contained, confront the world. To this type of woman there is always something slightly sordid and, even in their direst need, ridiculous, if tragically ridiculous, about money. No man feels that shrinking distaste for the subject which certain women feel, for no man experiences the inner conflict arising from a woman's conviction that, while money is unimportant, to be without it is horribly stultifying.

Indeed, when discussing money with a woman a man should keep reminding himself that her approach is not the same as his,

and that, however much they may see eye to eye in given instances, deep down she can never be persuaded that money has those almost sacrosanct properties with which he endows it. To a man money is consequential in itself, a symbol of solidity in a changing universe, but to a woman it is only the medium through which she can purchase what she wants. If high finance be a closed book to her, it is not that she is incapable of grasping its subtleties and ramifications, but merely that she considers it a rather childish yet, like so many rather childish things, a rather hazardous game, springing from man's incorrigible exuberance.

By an obvious association of ideas many women are apt to regard any offers of help from a man, other than a member of their family, as insulting. But once they are married they are just as likely to regard everything belonging to their husbands as theirs, even if the marriage should turn out a failure. Through the incidence of her husband having to support her by law, the average female has enlarged upon the assumption that what is his is hers, and, even if she cannot keep his affection, feels that she has every right to squeeze out of him whatever she can. I admit that many men try to evade their financial obligations to deserted wives, but it is also true that many a squabble about alimony shows up the woman as heartlessly grasping. The marriage tie may have become a mockery, but the mere fact of its existence can turn a fairly honourable woman into a downright plunderer.

Again, when a man quits the marital roof for good and all he is careful to remove only what belongs to himself, but some women in similar circumstances are not so careful. A long reliance on men tends to blunt their sensibilities, and in the process of packing they frequently annexe expensive trifles which, by no stretch of fancy, appertain legally to them. This may sound a shocking accusation, and yet it is not really so shocking. A woman who has lived with an object for years in her husband's home comes, first of all, to regard it as their joint property, and then, if she conceives a special fondness for it, as her own property; and numbers of more or less respectable wives would emulate Madame Bergeret's action, as described by Anatole France in *L'Anneau d'Amethyste*: "... she heaped into her trunks things which

she ought in ordinary fairness to have left to others. In this way she packed among her underclothes a silver cup which had belonged to M. Bergeret's maternal grandmother. Again, she added to her own jewels . . . the watch and chain of M. Bergeret's father."

Financial probity being one of the first essentials of a communal society, a man who is not to be trusted in money matters soon loses all reality in the opinion of his fellow-men. But women, perhaps because they are recognized as spenders of money rather than makers of it, can do things with impunity which would be disparaged in a man. The male "sponger" is regarded with contempt, the female "gold digger" with amusement. Naturally sex enters largely into it, and naturally the "gold digger" is a person of no standing; but nevertheless men do hold that women, as a class, are not sufficiently serious where money is concerned. Honest for the most part, yes—but not *serious*, not fully responsible.

This irresponsibility of theirs, which is more often innocent than calculated and most often of all probably simply feminine, has been fostered by men, who use their monetary resources, not alone as a lever in their dealings with women, but as a prop to their feelings of superiority. But if women are not always as strict as they might be, we must note that, unlike men, it is not in their nature to view money with the eye of an accountant. Balanced books and the train of education which gives a value to such things are outside their horizon, and they cannot understand the fuss men raise over such trifles as habitual overspending.

Numbers of women, who would no more think of stealing than of committing murder, have some queer ideas about financial dealings. They make a tremendous to-do if a tradesman overcharges on his weekly bills, but they see no urgent reason to point out an undercharge. That is *his* lookout! As for cheating a railway company by travelling without a fare if they can get away with it or swindling the Government in any direction—why, these are commendable acts of cleverness!

Of course, I am merely discussing general trends, for it is plain that many women are as honourable as the most honourable of

men, and that many men indulge in minor dishonesties ; but only by this method can a picture be composed which, however faulty and relative, is at least recognizable along sweeping lines. And the main feature of the picture is, it appears to me, that women regard money from a social rather than a financial angle and are therefore vague as to its niceties.

As in other matters, women incline to be extremists about money. They can be fantastically generous or they can be incredibly mean, but in the ups and downs of fortune they seldom hold an even course. When a rich woman decides to economize she may turn suddenly into a miser, and when a poor woman resolves to gratify a whim, bang goes the stoical restraint which has enabled her to scrape and save for years. Woman's sense of proportion about money gets submerged by her emotions, and she exhibits a curious lack of imagination in her madly fluctuating scale of values.

The woman who may be open-handed in one direction may be niggardly in another, and such persons as cabmen and waiters would much rather serve men than women. Some women, I agree, tip more handsomely than would almost any man, but most people prefer not to bank on the erratic chance of feminine benevolence, being well aware that as a rule women tip exiguously. Many a man, in a state of considerable embarrassment, has had to take privily aside some muttering porter or fuming steward and compensate him adequately against the inadequate tip of a female.

Women do not worry about money to the extent men worry about it. No doubt this is primarily due to an ingrained instinct that it is the province of some man to provide for every woman, but it is also due, I repeat, to their inherent feeling that money is not so important as men believe it to be. Harmony, they know, cannot be bought by wealth, and they never visualize, until the moment arrives, having to do without necessities or aids to adornment. They are convinced that men are the slaves to a false idealism about money, an idealism which happens to be inexplicably materialistic, and though they want their men folk to earn as much of it as they can, they are startled by their extreme elation

at success and their extreme dejection at failure. Why cannot they be reasonable and enjoy their lives without perpetually relating everything to a money standard?

While a working woman can make money go farther than her husband and lay out his wages with the most efficient economy, a well-to-do woman seldom masters the intricacies of investment. In the first case woman's capacity for saving comes into play, while in the second she is faced by what is to her the incomprehensible enigma of how money produces money. But then most women's sole knowledge of money is the personal handling of cash: it becomes a reality to them only when they can see it in their purses and calculate its buying power.

It is presumably the lure of saving which makes bargain sales of so irresistible an appeal to women that all ideas of decorum and comfort are thrown to the winds in their frantic scramble to obtain what they want at less than last week's prices. That the dresses they happen to be wearing may, and often do, sustain damage in the crush far beyond what any bargain could compensate for never seems to worry them, and at such times they lose their heads as completely as they do when they estimate that by spending 19s. 11½*d.* on some article of clothing they are getting it cheap, although to spend £1 upon it would be unreasonable. Their realism, goaded by their desire, stymies itself, so to speak, and drapers have not studied female psychology in vain.

In all the circumstances it is not astonishing that the woman with a sound business instinct is rare and that even the relatively few successful business women are usually amateurish. And as most women are sure that their optimism is based on an infallible instinct, it is extremely difficult to persuade them to sell out any shares they may happen to have when they see a profit: if they have heard a rumour they are going higher, that rumour is reinforced from within themselves. (Incidentally, men also can seldom be induced to sell on a rising market, but then they are quite ready to admit they are greedy.) It is notorious that the widow who attempts to augment her income generally ends by losing her capital; but if one were to cross-examine such a widow, the fault, in her reading of events, would not lie at her door.

Fondness for an individual, however worthless, makes almost any woman generous, and it is not merely conventionally degraded men who batten on women. The funny part is that women are not taken in by such men, though they will spend anything on them. A woman despises a man who accepts money from her, but the situation quickens her maternal instinct and her sense of power, and therefore she is prepared to lavish her means upon him in the very process of disillusionment.

A woman is perhaps never so wilfully oblivious to defects of character as a man can be, who, when he is in the throes of an unhappy love, will, if he belong to the type, grovel before the woman who is treating him abominably, just as a dog will lick the hand of the master who has kicked it; but yet a woman can minimize her lover's responsibility to such an extent and be so little influenced by tell-tale traits that her compassionate, and sometimes disdainful, forgiveness is all the more embracing.

Despite witticisms to the contrary, the possession of a fortune does not make a young woman so distrustful as it would make a young man. It gives her qualms, of course, but, being herself ready to sacrifice wealth for happiness, she finds it hard to credit that a man would tell her he loved her unless he did. Later on some rich women do become offensively purse-proud and extremely stingy, but to begin with they are almost shrinkingly anxious not to let their money stand 'twixt them and life. This shyness is sometimes mistaken for *hauteur*, a *hauteur* men are slow to thaw for fear of being misread, and I imagine that the lot of a rich young woman must often be fraught with a bitter sense of frustration. Her money casts its spell of silence in every direction.

Because women were in financial subjection to men through so many ages, relying on them as unquestioningly as a child relies on its parents, they have never, despite all the unloosing of their bonds, fully emerged from that state of mind. The cage has been opened, but many of them prefer not to leave it. And therein probably lies the crux of the problem—the mental problem as distinguished from the practical—of women's attitude to money.

THE GREAT QUALITIES

PERHAPS it needed some one like Sir Walter Scott, who, if one is to judge by his heroines, idealized women, to write certain truths about them that a realist, such as Lord Byron, would—and could—never have written. I refer to those lines of his in *Marmion* which, though they have probably aroused more ribaldry than agreement, are nevertheless, allowing for their old-fashioned phraseology, almost startlingly true:—

O, woman! in our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,
And variable as the shade
By the light quivering aspen made;
When pain and anguish wring the brow
A ministering angel thou!

The fact is that Scott, in his flowery and, shall we say, surface manner, hit the nail on the head. He decidedly did. Let us put it in this way: even the most stable women are subject to incalculable moods—moods that have to work themselves out like a sick headache; and as for foolish and flighty women, contrariness is their usual condition. But these signs of inner conflict, physical malaise, or inherent vapidity, are no criterion of their characters when confronted by the illness or trouble of others. At such times nearly all women forget their own worries and their own frivolity and take charge of the situation as to the habit born.

Indeed, it is misfortune, more often than not, which brings out the latent best in a woman, always provided that there is some particular person on whom she can lavish her care and her affection. The selfless part of her rises to the top, and all those little inconsistencies of her nature, all those little naggings, which sometimes make a man feel that pettiness and femininity are interchangeable terms, vanish in a moment. And so personal

are women that they believe no final disaster can happen to the people they love if only they be with them.

Many women suffer from a boredom which men, working throughout the day, cannot appreciate. But to be again in the centre of the picture, to feel that they are needed, gives women a sense of reality and draws out qualities which their humdrum lives may almost have atrophied. I do not mean to suggest that, faced by a crisis, they are conscious of exhilaration, for what they are conscious of is pity, but that subconsciously it is a profound and elemental satisfaction to a woman to be able to help vitally the people for whom she cares.

Most women, it must be borne in mind, are of the opinion that men never quite grow up, and therefore, when men come to them in their need, they are able to comfort them with the simplicity with which one comforts a child. On such occasions a woman is without irony, for her whole heart is in her task; and if her husband, for example, has lost the entire family fortune in some frantic gamble and runs to her in despair, her one immediate concern is to soothe his misery and assure him that she will stand by him to the uttermost.

The maternal instinct, being an instinct of protection, outlasts the child-bearing age, and women are never truer to their femininity than when enfolding somebody close to them, however elderly, in their compassion and tenderness. People often try to place women in such categories as wife-type, mistress-type, or mother-type, but though there are extreme cases where these differentiations hold good, in the normal woman there is inevitably something of all three. And the maternal in her, being the basis of her sex, is probably the strongest and most lasting influence. If one can successfully appeal to that, one is appealing to what will not fail.

A woman, even though she may not particularly have liked her husband or been particularly well-treated, will stick up for him when everyone else has deserted him and will continue to believe in him when everyone else thinks he is a rascal. There is, in trouble, an unquestioning consistency about her loyalty, a consistency triumphantly the opposite of her usual feminine

inconsistency, and when her man has his back to the wall she will defend him as a lioness defends her cubs. The feline in her nature can suddenly reverse itself.

For women are more single-minded than men, and however religiously they may have bowed to convention when things were going well, when things go badly public opinion means nothing to them. They are much more interested in people than in ideas—what woman, for instance, has the least hesitation about changing her name or even her nationality to marry the man of her choice, and what man, if up against such a necessity, would not hesitate?—and consequently both for their husbands and their children they can exhibit a blind devotion which is altogether impervious to revelation or pressure. It was Southey who wrote in *Madoc*,

What will not woman, gentle woman, dare,
When strong affection stirs her spirit up,

and though the poetry strikes me as decidedly poor, and “gentle” is perhaps not the most perspicacious word to apply to women, yet the answer is as expected—Anything.

In truth, a woman will face her husband’s ruin or disgrace without batting an eyelid, and face it to the last degree of poverty or ostracism, if she but feels that he needs her and is leaning on her. Few men are capable of such an unflinching attitude and, if need be, of such unqualified forgiveness. A woman’s pride is easily injured by neglect, but once her presence is essential, it is her pride to serve.

It is indeed curious—both things have been suggested in the foregoing paragraphs—that women, who are more primitive than men, are also more mature. I do not imply that the maturity is marked in most women, but only that there is something in the approach to life of even a commonplace woman which is more assured than that of even a clever man. It is not easy to describe it in words, for sometimes it may be due to ignorance rather than to ripeness, but women seem to have made up their minds about the vital things and to know exactly where they stand in relation to existence. Their views may be one-sided, but their bearing is free of doubt.

Many noble things have been written about motherhood—occasionally, I surmise, with the idea of encouraging women to perform their duty; but while it is true that a mother will do anything for her offspring, this is so universal an instinct in the animal kingdom that I hardly think she always deserves the credit bestowed on her. The unnatural mother is not sufficiently common to throw the others into bright relief and, much as we must admire the average woman's devotion to her children, it would be a dismal state of affairs were she to act otherwise. We are entitled to take the unselfishness of maternal love for granted.

All the same, the look on a mother's face when, unobserved, she is hovering over her child has a timeless beauty almost frightening in its absorption, and motherhood is the most conquering emotion in the world. To a really maternal woman there is no such word as defeat, and though she may lose her child, the memory lives on through every phase of anguish and despair until at last it settles radiantly upon her ageing heart.

When I was a boy, men were constantly engaging girls in long and witless discussions on the subject of "platonic friendship." I fear that the purpose of these discussions was not so much to ascertain the truth, as to create, in that era of discretion, an atmosphere for amorous approach—at any rate, one seldom hears such talk nowadays, when there is no need to beat about the bush. But though the expression is a silly one, and was, moreover, employed more often than not with an ulterior motive, it is clear that some of the staunchest friendships—friendships into which sex does not enter—are those between men and women.

I am not claiming that friendship between a man and a woman is ever quite the same as friendship between two men, for it is obvious that in speaking to a woman a man has to adjust his mind to certain inflexions, but I *am* claiming that when a woman is really a man's friend she can be absolutely relied on. Generally, though not invariably, such friendships are surest when there has never existed any emotional stress, because in that case complications of memory are ruled out and the ties are of an unruffled ease.

There are few greater satisfactions to a man than a devoted

woman friend. It brings a new peace into life, not alone because nearly all men need confidantes at times, just as most women have secrets they would rather confide to a man they trust than to any woman, but because feminine company at its best, though not at its most thrilling, is a perennial refreshment. Of course, a mutual tolerance is required to keep such friendships sweet, for all sorts of other interests intervene; but tolerance comes readily when characters are harmonious, and as friendships of this type are seldom of rapid growth, they do not mature where the ground is unfavourable. Above all, they are, when really mutual, not possessive.

A loyal woman friend will never let one down and will take up the cudgels on one's behalf quite regardless of the facts of the case. She is, as when defending her husband, whole-hearted in her advocacy, although the scale is different. A man may be an equally loyal friend, but though he will help you to the limit of his ability, yet he retains a judicial attitude. In short, little as he would desert you, he cannot give you that warm feeling of protection which a woman friend can give.

I have no wish to change places with the man who can see no woman save through the haze of conscious sex. Not only is such a man always getting into trouble, for his judgment is liable to be biased by his obsession, but he is missing an extraordinarily mellow relationship. Nor do I wish to change places with the man who despises women as such and can never, therefore, accept friendship with a woman seriously. He too, it seems to me, is missing one of the amenities of life. For in the friendship of a woman with a man there is a sympathetic give and take, an underlying consideration, which, in the nature of their being, cannot exist between men. But then, admittedly, the women able to give such a friendship are few.

Women are pleasingly imaginative about the social aspects of existence and will remember anniversaries and celebrations, not alone with meticulous care, but with gifts which, whether large or small, show that they have considered individual tastes. Some people may smile at their concern over any trivial lapse on their part, but it is really a witness to their underlying humanity;

they know how true it is that the small attentions are those which flatter and delight.

Another relationship, satisfactory in its placid, affectionate way and bringing out unselfish traits in women, is the relationship of brother and sister. Considering that a man has no choice in the selection of his sisters, and *vice versa*, it appears rather strange that they should, as a rule, be so devoted to his welfare. But it is evident that the recollections of childhood form an unbreakable tie, and that brothers and sisters intuitively understand those idiosyncracies which are the result of a common heredity and upbringing.

Comparatively few people have a wide circle of friends, and, as a scattered family grows old and the children of the second generation leave the nests, it is pathetic to note how the original members tend to come together again, and on terms easier than when they were ploughing their own furrows. The call of the blood, as one might say, grows louder in the twilight and memory harks back. Sisters and brothers are often irritating to one another in that they are fundamentally too alike in the aspects of themselves they most deplore, but a sister can usually grasp the tone of her brother's mind, even in its divergencies, without elaborate explanation, and is always generous in her reactions, if frequently meagre in her praise.

Many childless widows and unmarried women immerse themselves in good works and are iron-willed in their sense of social and moral obligations. The lonely existence of such women is a crown and their dedicated lives are their own reward. Celibacy adds a sort of zeal to their labours, and they glory in denying themselves the very things most women desire. Yet they can so wrap their minds round their duties, so perceive recompense in their mission, that they are often happy. The female fanatic is a power, not through her intelligence, but through her intensity. As Hindu women gladly immolated themselves on their husbands' pyres, so these women gladly surrender their comfort for the betterment of souls and bodies. In their own line they are heroines.

The stoicism of women with regard to physical pain may have

been forced upon them by their heritage, but that does not make it the less remarkable. Men are apt to raise vocal fuss over minor ailments, but women, who regard pain as their lot, are much more courageous. Despite the slight contempt they feel for men's clamour at such times, they will, without a word of reproach or comparison—that comes later, if it comes at all—look after them with the utmost solicitude, even though their tongue may be in their cheek.

And women are not only stoical about pain, they are stoical about sorrow. A bereaved woman, through a kind of pride in her dead and a resolve to be worthy of the memory, considers others before she considers herself, and is even able to sublimate her grief in thankfulness that suffering is at an end. Now that the bad Victorian habit of emotionalism has been banished, she does everything she can to conceal her feelings under a calm exterior; and in a sort of passionate determination not, as it were, to lose what has been lost or to be untrue to the uniting vows, will talk of her recently deceased husband as if he were in the next room. She steels herself in faithfulness when her heart may be breaking.

The number of ordinary, uninspired women who lead restricted and solitary lives without lamenting is enormous. The spinster of fifty, eking out a pittance by underpaid and distasteful tasks but keeping her gentility to the fore in smiling neatness, is really a dauntless person, and though we may flee when we notice such a one approaching, we ought to be ashamed of ourselves. Suppose women such as this *are* apt to be small-minded and parochial, what is that beside the astonishing, defiant courage which sustains them? Courage of a rare order: moral courage and, indeed, often physical courage.

In fact, the more one ponders it the more must one respect the stoicism and courage of women's natures. The sensual eye may be drawn to the pretty and popular women who flit charmingly here and there, but what of all the women who are plain and poor and unhappy? Their days hold few compensations and hope itself has been denied them, but they are not complaining—or, if they are, they are not complaining openly. No, they are facing

their cheerless present, their alarming future, with an apparently buoyant determination. Their martyrdom is all the more impressive in that it is neither appealing nor histrionic.

The great qualities of women are really great, and their selflessness and dignity give them, at their best, a place in the social scheme which the sentimentalist has no more fully allowed for than has the cynic.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE PERSONAL FACTOR

THE most disconcerting thing about human beings is that they all differ from one another—differ to such an extent that their entities are never really decipherable—and yet it is the one thing we are likely to forget when writing about them as men or women. Or perhaps it is the one thing we have to forget; if we remembered it how would we dare to generalize? Yet, just as the laws of chance are only seen functioning to perfection over a great number of throws, though they must have begun to function from the beginning, so generalizations about people in the mass cannot be accurate unless, in some degree, they are applicable to the individual.

Naturally, I do not mean that the really fair generalizations one might make about women as a class—for there are innumerable traits which apply merely or mainly to special types—are equally evident in every woman; I mean only that in the same way as there are certain universal male characteristics, so are there certain universal female characteristics. In brief, that the physical differences between men and women have, in some form or other, a more or less exact counterpart in mental differences.

I am not so foolish as to pretend that it is possible to put a finger on the actual spot. It is far too imponderable and comprehensive for that, far too interwoven with sex, and yet it is perfectly obvious. In one sense personality rises above sex, in another it is a part of sex; and, to be candid, I am not quite sure which are the generalizations beyond dispute. Perhaps no separate one is, perhaps words are inadequate, and yet there it stands, staring one in the face, plain as a pikestaff.

Yes, it is there true enough, but now and then one meets women who upset practically all one's preconceived theories. It is very perplexing, because they can make one feel that one has never

really known anything worth knowing about them and that the whole of one's attitude will have to be reoriented. Such women are not unfeminine in the ultimate interpretation of the word—far from it—but they appear to transcend femininity, as if the dross had been combed out of it. There is something calmly mature about their serenity, something smilingly grown-up about their wisdom, and one feels vaguely in their presence that they know more about life than any man. This may be an illusion, but if so it is the kind of illusion which gives point to existence. They seem, rightly or wrongly, to be nearer the source of enlightenment than ordinary mortals, and one has the feeling that to be friends with them would be as strengthening as, for Antæus, it was strengthening to touch the earth. Mrs. Asquith (Lady Oxford), I fancy, must have been describing just such a woman when she wrote in her *Autobiography*: "She is among the rare women who have all the qualities which in moments of exasperation I deny to them."

But if there are those thrilling women to bewilder and hearten, there are women who, from another angle altogether, can shatter one's generalized philosophy. The "intense" women, the corrupt women, the incurably unperceptive women, the amorphous women who melt into nothing as you talk to them—all these types leave one hopelessly at sea. The personalities of women tend to be more marked, on the surface, than men's, and so when one does come up against a strange woman she is—at least, to a man—particularly strange. And of course her personality, the personality of all women, is the more obscure in that it is subject to nervous upheavals. Moods, for instance, frequently have a background outside of her real self, and the most commonplace female is capable of baffling surprises.

On the other hand, a man soon learns things about a woman which he never divulges to her, just as a woman soon learns things about a man. That plus and minus account between men and women goes on mounting year by year, and plenty of husbands and wives have whole ledgers full of unwritten debits and credits. A man may come to trust a woman profoundly, and yet he can never be entirely certain that she will not suddenly crack—the

victim of a series of suppressions of which he may have been hardly conscious. A woman holds herself in till the last moment and may, indeed, continue to make wittily disdainful remarks about the silly conduct of other women when she is on the verge of behaving in an exactly similar way herself. One has to guess and guess, and then guess again.

A woman's personality—almost any woman's personality in certain conditions of proximity—can, beyond doubt, bemuse a man's judgment of women as completely on the intellectual as on the sensual plane. But the more abstruse a subject, the more absorbing it is, and to comprehend women at all one must not only think about them constantly, but meet them constantly. And not only meet them, but be inherently interested in them, and therefore (for it follows) inherently sympathetic to them. People have a remarkable capacity—at any rate for brief periods—of living up to one's expectations, and if one be scornful of women, they are apt either to draw into their shells, quietly or ostentatiously as the case may be, or else, out of pique or bravado, deliberately set forth to attract. In neither instance will you meet the real woman.

Why some women are instinctively charming and other women instinctively the reverse, why some appear to be born gracious and others born cantankerous, is one of the riddles with which personality abounds. There is an explanation for everything, even for personality, but I do not see how one is to arrive at it. The only words one can use are, in themselves, too catholic. This unique thing, so compact and yet so multitudinous, makes every woman an original study in a manner far more rounded than the truism indicates, and therein lies half the zest of tracking womanhood through the woman.

Women are very conscious of their own personalities, though when they are naturally popular and delightful they say nothing about them. And, indeed, why should they? And, indeed, how could they, being what they are? Unhappier women, however, will often deplore their shortcomings or more often, perhaps, wonder openly why they are not liked. This breeds in some a curious kind of feminine recklessness, which nearly always

takes a shape harmful to themselves. In others it breeds shyness, and such women, in trying to shun life, may develop either a false modesty or a bitter resentment.

But, by and large, women are less touchy than men, perhaps because, as a rule, they are less conceited. But there are exceptions to this, and some women are as prickly as thistles. Their defensive mechanism, rather than their arrogance, is on the alert; but if men set out to disarm their suspicions, not only can they usually succeed, but often make loyal friends.

For women have a gift for dog-like devotion which few men possess. This, I presume, is frequently the outcome of an unrequited affection, but it is none the less selfless. A woman employed by a man will, if he treats her with ordinary consideration, do more for him than would any man, and with no hope of an emotional, or any other, reward. Her individuality, suppressed in private life, expands in her work, and her recompense is his gratitude. Indeed, the aim of many women is to conjure up an anodyne against the famishment of their hearts, and it is pitiful to think how a word of thanks, accompanied by a smile, has the power to bring felicity to a middle-aged spinster whose youthful dreams were full of romance.

I am generalizing, I know, but I cannot help it. All generalizations, even of the more specialized kind dealing with types, have to do with the average, but you cannot docket women with the slightest approach to precision. When you find a woman—Elizabeth Barrett Browning—writing, as she does in *Aurora Leigh*,

Most illogical,
Irrational nature of our womanhood,
That blushes one way, feels another way.
And prays, perhaps, another !,

it is hardly surprising that men are eternally at a loss.

Of course, it is also impossible to generalize about men, but there is not the immediate inclination to classify them, for in social life they are educated to give less rein to their minor idiosyncrasies. Perhaps it all boils down to this, that, conventionally, men have to yield to women, while women are entitled to impress their will on men.

Many women are much too clever, or merely much too nice, to exercise such dominion openly, and anyhow it depends on her personality, and on your relation to that personality, whether a woman's words wound you or flatter you or leave you indifferent. Nothing is more pleasant than to be domineered at the right instant, nothing more pleasant than to domineer, and the play of one character on another can produce a hundred protean shapes.

To understand women and to get on with them are two distinct things, and often the most successful men with women are those extroverts who have never given the matter a thought and whose approach is so purely intuitive that they do not even know it is an approach. Undoubtedly, a handsome man will always captivate women of a certain order, but as handsome men are relatively scarce and usually very vain—the “lady-killer,” with his curled moustache, stands beside the “wicked baronet,” in his fur coat, as a figure of fun—you will frequently find that the men who are really irresistible have but few physical qualities to recommend them. But they have an unanalysable something about them which fascinates women, and as personality flowers only through the interplay of another personality, these are the men who, with a glance, can make women feel alive.

Presumably, any sensible man, by pursuing the art of pleasing, can carve his special niche with women, but the born conqueror gains much more without bothering to put himself out at all. He has, as one might say, the secret password, and that is something which cannot be acquired by practice. It is clearly an emanation of sex attraction, but it falls into no defined category. A weakling may have it, a strong man may lack it; and though “cave men” are popular with some women, they are detested by others. As to whether women are attracted sexually by brains alone, that is very moot.

And certainly the same sort of thing is true of women. In the slang of to-day, some of them possess “IT,” and such women are not necessarily either beautiful or brilliant. But they too have the password; they too are irresistible. And though they soon become self-conscious and play up their appeal for all it is worth,

nevertheless it can be cultivated only because it is there to cultivate. These devastating females, these modern examples of the *femme fatale*, have been endowed with instincts precisely suited to their needs, and they glide down their youthful years as sure of themselves as if they were prophetesses. Not for them—not for some time—the ordinary qualms.

But just as one cannot know what sort of a world a fly sees through its multiple lenses, so no man can know all that any woman, be she prophetess or parlourmaid, thinks or experiences. And if her thoughts were all unbared to him he would not properly understand her, for her womanhood seeps through her personality and creates its own incommunicable values. Every man, chatting to a woman, is liable to discover that, however well they may agree and however mutual be their interests, she does not, in some hidden manner, quite mean what he means. Her personality may respond to his, but, like the fly, she sees a different world.

Any intimate conversation contains, naturally, its unspoken undertones, but men would be surprised at the incongruous things which may be passing through a woman's head when she appears to be listening to him intently. Odd, very odd, questions about himself, worries about her daughter's schooling, a sudden stab of melancholy out of the past, fears that the cook is getting dissatisfied, anxiety about a new wall-paper, calculations about her dress for next Tuesday—a score of diverse thoughts, bizarre or homely, chasing one another like excited mice.

Women are aware of their own complexity, and sometimes they are seized with a longing to be frank (a queer, intermittent touch in their reserved and secretive natures) and to explain everything to some man. But they cannot succeed, and even in the process of being frank they usually switch over, not through dishonesty so much as through hopelessness, and end up by trying to produce an impression. They are annoyed that men should so systematically misunderstand them, but they do not really want to be read aright.

Sex is more criss-crossed in a woman's life than in a man's, and consequently her personality reflects it more unceasingly. She has not the same means of getting away from herself as a man,

and her sense of proportion tends to be vitiated by her disabilities. She will, let us say, frighten and yet enthrall a man by giving him sidelong glances as early as breakfast, but then, forgetting, as it were, her primary aim, she may go out and do something so humourless in public that everybody laughs. For example, I read not very long since that a number of New York women had held a meeting and resolved to abolish the term "mother-in-law" in favour of "kin-mother." But in doing so, do they propose to abolish those traits of mothers-in-law—and all universal jokes have a kernel of truth—which have given the word its special significance? Otherwise there will now be two guffaws where before there was only one.

Perfection and certitude, fortunately for us all, are impossible to achieve. Women, as women, have defects inherent in their attributes, while as individuals the mystery of their personalities is made all the more fathomless by the femininity of their minds. Perhaps that is why men with feminine streaks know how to soothe them and how to inspire them with a rather contemptuous trust and affection. Women like to be treated with a sort of intimate subtlety, but then, too, they have a marked respect for mental integrity, so long as it falls short of personal brusqueness. What they do not like—and why blame them?—is to be treated as nonentities.

Here I am generalizing again, but these seem to me to be very true generalizations. Every woman, as every man, is potentially subject to flattery. But as she is always on her guard against men's blarney, the flattery must wind itself into her psychology and voice insidiously her own musings. Sugared words leave her cold, save in moments of brief, alcoholic hilarity, and though she may yearn to be admired, the admiration of her admirers may sicken her.

There is of course a feminine simplicity which men often miss because they are on the lookout for something else. And, in truth, it *can* be very deceptive: unlike the simplicity of a simple man, it is not stable. A woman, in certain phases, hankers after that kind of cool companionship which allows her to be herself, and she can enjoy many of the things a man enjoys, if not with

the same gusto, with the same feeling of escape. Women frequently rebel against the doll-like atmosphere with which men, trying to be complimentary, surround them, although on occasion they are the first to encourage it. They wish their personalities to be considered as well as their sex; they want their pleasures to be regarded as pleasures and not merely as symptoms. But that is just where men so often fail them.

The erroneous idea that Mohammedans believe women not to possess souls finds an echo in many a masculine heart, because men cannot altogether rid themselves of the notion that women are females before they are individuals. They greet them with a set smirk—set in their minds as on their lips—and they treat them with an up-to-the-minute version of over-acted gallantry. This is prone to exasperate women beyond endurance. Their desire for equality is basically a desire to be regarded as human beings, and there is a genuine foundation for that sense of injustice which permeates so many of their innermost reflections.

And so in all our dogmatic statements about women, let us remember that we are groping in a cloudy region. But if their personalities are elusive, they are also vital, and perhaps some day, for some of us, there may be a lightening in the sky. False dawn probably, but never despair!

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE SOCIAL APPROACH

WOMEN, having, as a rule, more time on their hands than men, have created a marvellous pattern of social obligations and nuances in order to give to existence both coherence and piquançy. Theirs are the hands which mould the social fabric, and they will take literally endless pains to keep its walls smooth and all its interior decoration intact. For them the matter is too momentous to be a conscious game, but it *is* a game, and a game with a purpose. To guard her position in society is of paramount importance to the average woman, and in every walk of life there are gradations which, imperceptible to the outsider, are of extreme significance to those interested. The joke about keeping up with the Jones' is no joke to women, and the great lady who entertains on a lavish scale is no more concerned with her supremacy than is the poor woman who feels that she will be eternally disgraced unless she can flaunt a new bonnet in the face of her neighbours.

But this spirit of rivalry, though it has its paltry manifestations, is also a sign of something lasting and valuable. Society in the communal, not the snobbish, sense owes its cohesion and vitality to the ceaseless activities of women, and were they not so deeply affected by the status of themselves and their families, our private lives would be swayed by the appeal of disintegrating and momentary impulses. It is this underground ferment which builds up, renews, and fortifies the solid growth of social institutions. Women are often accused of being ultra-conventional, but it would be impossible to hold society together on any but a conventional foundation, and women's resolve to do the "right" thing and to preserve a rigid etiquette is bound up with their knowledge of human nature. Once let mankind free of its social tethers and there would be a general tumbling of values and, with that, a general slackening of precedent and duty.

It is true that foolish women are often betrayed by their conventional leanings into thinking that the only way of getting on is to stifle originality and behave like imitative dummies. Such women can never go far or become leaders, for society has little patience with bores, but the fact is they are interpreting convention too narrowly. The sparkling women in the forefront may say or do what appear to be unconventional things, but they have a strict convention of their own. The difference is that they are imaginative enough to perceive that a reputation for eccentricity or daring gives them a sort of aristocratic prestige, always provided that at heart they are conservative.

Women's basic relation to society is more philosophic, more grounded on a definite theory, than is usually supposed. Its destiny is their special concern, for they would be lost in a universe not harmonized socially according to feminine ideals; and therefore, even in their internecine wars, they have a common wish to instil order into the texture of existence. A woman may consider her struggle a purely individual one, she may even detest her competitors, but, to a greater or less degree, all women are trending in the same direction. The moon may revolve round the sun like a boxer searching for a weak spot, but both the sun and the moon are travelling together into outer space.

Power is as ardent a passion with women as it is with men, and in the social field, where women are matched one against the other, they have full scope for displaying their generalship. And a woman's victories, though often personal, are not necessarily at the expense of anyone in particular; they may be victories known only to herself. Her hunger to shine is not so much rooted in pleasure as in the feeling that she is fulfilling her trust and maintaining her place. Society in all its aspects is an intricate web, and the aim of women is so to manœuvre their own threads that they are woven in and out of the others without a break or even a jar. Only by such sustained and silken contact can a woman achieve the double satisfaction of safety and success.

Nearly three and a half centuries ago Marlowe wrote in *Hero and Leander*, "All women are ambitious naturally," and his words remain just about as true to-day as they were then. But this

ambition is only fitfully selfish. When a woman encourages her husband in his career and urges him on to still wider efforts it is partly, no doubt, that she may rise in wealth and grandeur as he rises, but there is also a profound gratification in watching the results of her handiwork and in feeling that hers is the driving force.

As for her longing to see her children succeed, her sons to thrive and her daughters to make brilliant marriages, that may be called her crowning recompense. She may gain nothing material by it at all, but her devotion is justified by events and in the battlefield of society she has won a memorable combat. In the success of her children there is at once a simple emotion of pleasure and a complex emotion of triumph. And indeed they sometimes clash, with the result that, though her children's welfare is her dearest wish, she may be ready to sacrifice their happiness to their prosperity.

Naturally, there are small-minded, vain women who are deliberately selfish in their social aspirations and who employ all their skill and energy for the purpose of enhancing their own position. Women of this type may make themselves notorious by the brazen openness of their designs, but by and large the "climber" is more shrewd. She takes infinite trouble to prepare the ground, she trains herself in adaptability, and thus her advance is apparently as effortless as that of a soaring bird. The girl who started in the chorus may finish, not only as a peeress, but as a peeress to the manner born. She has visualized the prejudices in every direction she has to overcome, she has schooled herself in observation and mimicry, and, as if by instinct, she has learnt how to avoid the rocks that lie between her and security.

Of course, few girls, in any of their relative spheres, achieve exalted distinction, but vast numbers achieve a sort of slightly invidious distinction. It is astonishing how many women flourish on the fringe of good society—astonishing and amusing. They are acquainted with the men but not with the women, and for numbers of them this is as far as their ambition goes. For to pit their wits against women as well as against men on this dangerous plane implies a self-control and vigilance which relatively

few women think worth while. They revel in the sense of eminence and comfort that comes from hobnobbing with the fashionable or the rich, but they are cautious enough to acknowledge their limitations or fearful enough not to risk a fall.

Women are very far-sighted about certain things, and however boundless their ambition, they judge the possibilities of a situation to a nicety and, being realists, can bask in a sunshine which falls short of their original hopes. The most capable adventuresses are seldom those of whom one hears much, and the woman whose objective does not outrun her capacity and who fights shy of the limelight is wise in her generation. Certainly, there are historic cases of women who have mounted from height to height, beginning in the humblest surroundings and emerging as the virtual rulers of kingdoms, but, like their male counterparts, the big and little Napoleons, they nearly always end badly.

And in the social struggle a woman cannot afford to be beaten. Far better for her never to issue from obscurity than to fight her way into prominence, to scale the greasy pole, only to sink back whence she came. The Becky Sharps of the world are the people at whom everybody points a contemptuous finger, whereas the man who has failed in a similar quest can always retrieve, if not his position, at least his peace of mind. But then women are relentless to one another in circumstances which have aroused their jealousy or antagonism, while men can accept complacently the ups and downs of their fellow men.

Almost everyone, man and woman alike, is a snob in some direction or other. And because it is a universal and, to some extent, depending on one's interpretation, a creative emotion—for it does have the effect of spurring people on—I think that in its essence, though never in its manifestations, there is rather more to be said for it than usually is said for it. This, however, is another question, and I would merely mention here that though women are socially more snobbish than men, they are also more astute in the way they go about it. The artlessness of the male snob makes him preposterous, but the female snob eschews the obvious. She does not show her hand; she merely hints, in the most casual manner, that it is a good one. The male snob is

unmasked as blatantly vulgar, but the female snob leaves one uncertain. This is the general rule, but when, as occasionally happens, one comes across an exception, the result is damning. It is not alone that one despises her, as one would despise a man, for her shallow snobbishness, but that one despises her for a stupidity which, as a woman, she ought to be above.

Some women have an almost frantic desire to be in the artistic "swim" and to become acquainted with celebrities simply because they are celebrities. It is difficult to see what comfort it brings them, but it does bring them comfort. Perhaps it is a form of collecting mania, but be that as it may, there are women who will risk ridicule and endure rebuffs if only they may meet and entertain people who care nothing about them and about whose very accomplishments they themselves really care nothing. But they are the figures of the hour, and for others to discover that *you* know them appears to be a felicity beyond words. Such women remind one of those bouncing dogs who greet the stranger with capers of delight and yelps of joy, and five minutes later have forgotten him.

It is never safe to dogmatize about a woman's motives, and even the most obvious social or intellectual "climber" is actuated by instincts and reasons which, though they may converge on one point that is clear enough, are not wholly transparent in themselves. The crudest ambition has its curious ramifications—what suppressed self-esteem, what dreams of splendour, may lie at the core of desire!—and though we may justly assert that sex rivalry enters into many a woman's social activities, yet we must recognize that sex rivalry is itself far from being as direct as it sounds. A woman's mind may be likened to an enormous, complete dictionary, in which, however, the words are not placed in alphabetical order but are jumbled up haphazard. Every explanation and spelling is there if you can get hold of it, but you may spend a lifetime in trying to produce some attempt at sequence.

But naturally, "climbing," as a patent aim, is only one tiny facet of the social approach. The underlying purpose of women is to keep alive those graces of intercourse and that stability of manners which are, at once, their delectation and their safeguard.

Goethe says in *Elective Affinities*, "The Society of Women is the foundation of good manners," and though this comment is capable of a surface interpretation, it is also capable of a deeper interpretation. Men left to themselves lead a planless social life, but women are intense, almost fanatical, believers in social order; they *must* know exactly where they stand in relation to the people around them. They are fond of mixing, but they are more critical than men, and the ritual of social usages enables them to be both cordial and selective at one and the same time.

A woman's goal shifts according to her fortunes, but though, in a sense, it is nebulous, nevertheless it is always distinctly before her. She does not let her mind be sidetracked by irrelevancies, and, whether her ambition be merely to retain the respect of her set or whether she aspire to procure a title for her husband, she never allows an opening to slip her by. She has qualities of alertness and concentration which many a man might envy, and if she lacks other qualities which men possess, this very lack may be helpful to her in the struggle. A certain want of sensitiveness about feelings is almost essential to her campaign, unless indeed she is one of those rare and gifted personalities who win to success by sheer charm.

And yet social amenities, in their best sense, signify much to women, and so long as rivalry does not press upon them too closely they like others to share in their prosperity and to taste of their luck. The really social woman is both expansive and secretive: she is expansive in that her wish to help her friends and benefit her neighbours is perfectly genuine; she is secretive in that nobody can tell, not even those nearest to her, what is her ultimate design and what precisely the gratification she derives from nursing it.

But it is just as easy to be too captious as too emotional about women, and as most men are inclined to be one or the other or, more often, both, the tendency is to misinterpret the direction of their motives. One may laugh at women's preoccupation with social trifles, but if they did not have this preoccupation the lives of men would be much less balanced and regular. The

women who make an idol of society are merely extreme examples of the social-minded urge of women in general; it is not their attitude which is significant, it is their background.

Women are instinctive builders and, outside their families, society is their grand experiment in architecture; they are always elaborating the outline of the conventional frame. And putting aside their need for a recognized position only to be found in social security, this building gives them a chance to play their part and not leave everything to men. Indeed, because the wishes of women are feminine they are not necessarily ravelled, although men like to think that they are so in almost all eventualities. Women, being foes to the chaotic, face their responsibilities seriously and will not stand for evasions. The man earns the money, the woman sees to it that it is expended profitably, not alone in a financial, but in a social, sense. But of course "profitably" may not imply to her what it implies to a man.

Many women are quite well aware that their interests are rather small and circumscribed, but they overcome this feeling by endowing these interests with a new dignity. As she is the predominantly social partner of a marriage, a woman will make that side as helpful as the business side, which is predominantly her husband's. This gives meaning to drudgery and equality to partnership. She may be a conscious schemer into the bargain, but one set of ambitions does not exclude another, and the best wives are often those who have most fired their husbands' imaginations.

Just as a woman runs the domestic details of her home to make it function as efficaciously as possible, so does she run the social life of herself and her family. Her inherent sense of fitness goes far beyond ordinary rivalry, and social confidence is for her, as I have suggested, the primary essential of existence. On her shoulders rests a burden which, if it is to be beneficially borne, must not appear to be a burden at all. As a husband returning weary from his day's toil expects to find the machinery of his home working so smoothly that he hardly suspects the labour behind the scenes, so does a clever wife conceal from this same husband her social intrigues under an air of easy mastery.

Women may consult their husbands on the general lines of their joint activities, but it is upon the wives alone that the details devolve. And despite the trouble and the heartaches, women would not have it otherwise. They have an abhorrence of the slovenly in their social arrangements, and they deplore men's habit of sudden forgetfulness of what is seemly. The casual visitor, however welcome to a husband, is practically never welcome to his wife, who highly resents the mere contingency of being caught off her guard. An Englishwoman's home is her castle in a more fiercely individual meaning than is an Englishman's home *his* castle.

It comes to this, that as society is woman's particular care, she considers herself entitled to lay down the rules which control it. She is acting, not only for herself, but for her family and, indeed, for women in general. If she does happen to have personal ambitions they are but the small self-conscious ripple on a vast unselfconscious tide. At least, that is the theory and the ideal.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE FRUITS OF EMANCIPATION

IF one assumes that happiness and contentment are two of the main objects of life, it may be doubted whether emancipation has achieved for women all they thought it would achieve. True, it has done away with injustices, some of them more apparent than real, and been a sop to injured feelings, but has it brought women much inner satisfaction and given them a more stable background? In short, has emancipation, in any vital respect, fulfilled the desires which created it?

These, it seems to me, are reasonable questions to ask; and never mind if, in asking them, you are called a reactionary. It is only a bogey word used by mediocrities and dogmatists to frighten those who show insufficient readiness to be enslaved by their pet theories.

It is no use contending that conduct is founded principally on logic, when we know perfectly well that it is founded, more often than not, on impulse, passion, state of health, and all sorts of other things; but the total equality of women with men is based on a purely logical concept of relatively recent growth. The fact that it did not appeal to our forefathers may be of small theoretical value, but is perhaps of considerable empirical value.

I am not disputing the propriety of women having equality in divorce and possessing the vote or, indeed, of being given similar chances to men in any direction, especially where standards of social justice are concerned; I am only speculating as to whether their revised status has, on balance, improved their position to the point where it is of real benefit to the majority of them. Women have always wielded great power behind the scenes, where they could exercise their peculiar feminine talent for intrigue by governing men's hearts and controlling their judgment,

but I wonder whether, now that the barriers are down, they have not to some extent damaged their prestige.

More and more capable women, in their new-found freedom, have taken up work, such as civic employment, which in other days was performed by men. They make excellent executives and do not spare themselves; and yet I venture to think that the more truly feminine a woman is, not merely in the old sense, mark you, but in the new, the more does she despise the man-like efficiency, an efficiency which, in the last analysis, strikes one as being rather neuter than man-like, which seems so often to stamp the woman in business, or in public, life. And I fancy her instinct is right. As Conrad says in *Nostromo*: "A woman with a masculine mind is not a being of superior efficiency: she is simply a phenomenon of imperfect differentiation—interestingly barren and without importance."

A longing for security is almost universal among women, and that is why, however old-fashioned it may sound, a woman really wants her husband to be the head of the family in the exact meaning—a man whom she can respect for his capacity to guard and to furnish. But now that she has been granted legal equality with him, she is only too liable to run counter to her own instincts and, by insisting on her rights, which, though precise in one direction are nebulous in another, undermine her peace. Something in the ancient equilibrium has been upset, and in many a home there is discord and unrest where, in former times, there would have been at least an amicable acquiescence.

In the Victorian era women, and especially the vast army of women to whom the Queen was a guiding star, regarded marriage as a final step and settled down to face it without qualms. It should be borne in mind that three powerful influences were then at work, influences which have now, to a large extent, ceased to function, but which, though they must have made a good many lives decidedly dreary and were often no doubt the expression of a hypocritical outlook, did help, in the main, towards a sensible acceptance of things as they were. These three influences were Society, Religion, Ignorance.

The breaking of a marriage vow, or indeed any irregular

escapade, was apt to lead to social ostracism, fear of hell, and unfortunate physical results. But who would deny that the bonds have now been loosed to such an extent that divorce has become a trifle, hell a mirage, and ignorance of her own physiology an unbelievable oversight? Convention is no longer stronger than Nature, for Nature has herself been harnessed—with what effect on the nervous systems of women doctors could speak with more accuracy than I could.

But have women as a whole gained by these new criterions? Many Victorian marriages, I admit, were intensely stuffy, particularly where women, through faulty upbringing and false education, were taught to regard sex merely as an unpleasant duty; but, at any rate, the position of the wives was assured and their old age automatically provided for. These may not have been exalted ideals, yet they were something. But now that women have kicked over the traces and evince no special regard for conventional morality, they feel a craving to express themselves, and in the effort to do so are constantly running up against trouble.

Successful marriage requires a trained self-restraint, an honourable approach to a mutual contract, but if women (and men too, for the matter of that) are always searching for what they have not, they are likely to find nothing which endures. Of course, there are hosts of individual exceptions to this rule, but it is fairly safe to say that the woman who sinks into the habit of indulging her latest whim will end up as dissatisfied as she began, and probably alone.

But now that women claim sex equality with men—as if they had not had it before in their own special orbit!—men have inevitably shifted their ground. They are still the suitors for ladies' hands, but their suits are, as it were, more critical, because women have let it be known that they are unfettered and that constancy for its own sake is not a merit. There must be alive to-day countless women who have not married, or not married the right men, through a failure to face their problems wisely. They would assert that they had only been straightforward and modern; but logic, as I suggested earlier,

is not always a sound guide. I am not necessarily referring to those pre-marital relationships which, though theologically forbidden and frowned on by society, may be very reasonable—the force of the argument depends on factors individuals alone can judge—I am referring rather to a state of mind. It is no use pretending that a girl is as free an agent as a man. She simply is not. Her mother, certainly her grandmother, could give her some useful tips.

If men do not want to impinge upon women's spheres, why do women want to impinge upon men's? I am not so silly as to think that women should be relegated to the nursery and the kitchen or any nonsense such as that, but I am not at all sure that the successful running of a house is any easier than the successful running of an office. But many women despise housekeeping, though they would be mortified were their husbands to announce that they were sick of work and intended in the future to do nothing but gad about and enjoy themselves.

Newly-gained freedom is notoriously a wine that goes to the head, and women, who were once more or less content with their lot, now feel a sting to rival men in their activities, and this not merely from economic reasons but to show their independence. Let them by all means, if they can; but would it not be more judicious if they counted the cost? Undoubtedly, there are born spinsters, just as there are born bachelors, but most women want to be settled and have a home and children. And they want it even if they scarcely know they want it. It is the law of their being.

But many women nowadays, especially women who work for a living, either pretend that they are quite happy as they are or keep putting off a decision until it is too late. They forget that, with few exceptions, they grow less attractive as the years go on, but, coincidentally, more difficult to please. Thus they are doubly handicapping themselves, with the only result, in many cases, that a sense of frustration and bitterness begins to torment them. Their freedom has turned sour.

The physical weakness and disabilities of women are things which no legal equality can alter. In so far as equality safeguards

women, good and well, but in so far as it tends to put them at a disadvantage, surely it is a curse rather than a blessing. When women were petted as helpless lambs (which they never were), they knew just how to play their cards; but why should a man feel over-chivalrous towards a possible rival, who has no hesitation in telling him that she is as competent as he is at his own job?

Equality, I am inclined to think, has induced a selfishness in women from which they were formerly free, though, naturally, one must allow for the change in economic conditions. One need not be an advocate of large families to be an opponent of sterile marriages. But how many marriages these days are entered upon either with the expressed intention of having no children or of waiting a few years? And when the few years have elapsed, how many of the wives are still fertile, how many of the marriages still exist? Men, it may be said, are as much to blame as women; but as a young wife can usually twist her husband round her finger, it is with her, as a rule, that the decision rests.

And in most cases of this description it is a short-sighted policy. It is true that having a child is curtailing, troublesome and expensive, but then it is an inherent satisfaction to the average woman, and not alone a fulfilment of her destiny but a shield against future unhappiness. Youth, I am only too well aware, is brief, and ought to be seized while it is there, but women who defeat Nature—they need not be its slaves—defeat themselves. What an obvious, and what an ignored, truism!

Emancipation had to come, for it was in the spirit of the times, but I cannot help feeling that it was a pity it had to come with such a rush, not because of the fact but because of the extremist cast of women. The revolt against the smugness and suppressions of Victorianism was inevitable, but I hardly see why a girl who, a relatively few years ago, would have led a calm and more or less cloistered existence, should now want to be as hectic as a sunset and feel that everything is allowed. It may all be very pleasurable while she is young, but she may repent it later. I would not assert that that was in itself a bar, for it is absurd to live too cautiously; I only emphasize that the length and depth of the sorrow may be out of all proportion to the shortness and

sharpness of the pleasure. One need not be a wizard to visualize the misery of an ageing woman who has thrown away her chances and has nothing to fall back on. But then youth never believes it will grow old.

A deadly boredom finally descends upon a woman who is perpetually given the lead. This may not be true of unsexed or masculine women, who have always been disgruntled on principle and always will be, but it is probably true even of those women who resemble the anarchic heroines of Ibsen, Strindberg, and Shaw. (How tame, by the way, they seem these days!). But many modern girls, drunk with their freedom and obsessed therefore by their personalities, have lost their psychological insight and trample on young men, not delicately, as girls ever have trampled on them, but contemptuously. This may gratify their sense of mastery, their feeling that now, at last, women have taken their rightful place, but it has also stultified their capacity for normal relationships. Men of any character do not choose for their wives women who are so unrestrained that they are more like captious fillies than human females. Their physical desire does not conquer, to the pitch of matrimony, their mental distaste, and many, perceiving that this is the result of emancipation, would echo Meredith's aphorist in *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*: "I expect that Woman will be the last thing civilized by Man."

That is one type of the modern girl, and another is the type (they often merge) who is always trying to make out that sex, however agreeable as a relaxation, is a farcical joke, a comic trick of nature, and that *her* mind, at least, can rise superior to such differences. For girls of this sort there are no barriers at all, and they mingle in men's talk, even at its fraternal bawdiest, as if they were men themselves. I admit that some men encourage them in this, but most men dislike it. It is not that they have an unduly exalted regard for women, but that women make them feel uncomfortable when they abolish the traditional taboos and reticences. There are certain things men prefer to keep to themselves, for their attitude to each other—the turn of their minds, the way they talk—is invariably different from their attitude to

women, however intimate they may be with them. Moreover, as men, beneath the surface, have a curious masculine sensitiveness, they often find embarrassment in jumping hurdles which women of a particular type jump with the utmost facility. There is about such women a half-over-sexed, half-under-sexed pose which is singularly futile.

And then there are the girls who, like rudderless ships, float along on the mere tide of their impulses. That is all freedom has done for them. The present is here, the future is obscure; why not grasp the flying moment? It is a kind of philosophy, but rather like that of the fabled grasshopper. And in fact, though many of these girls are smart both in appearance and conversation, and easy to get on with through their capacity for companionship and their lack of conviction, their foresight is scarcely superior to that of grasshoppers. In brief, they are lost.

There is also a more serious-minded type of modern girl, the type who studies hard at, let us say, some art and who regards a career as all-important for the time being, although she intends to marry one of these days. But she, too, is apt to mistake the shadow for the substance by allowing her interests to swamp, rather than enrich, her life. For life, in some inexplicable way, is liable to let down women whose ambitions are too comprehensive. The savour of existence is subconsciously bound up to a large extent with traditional aptitudes, and many a girl who appears to be on the road to success is filled with a vague foreboding.

But it is surprising how much latent conservatism there is in women and what numbers of them are touched merely outwardly by the tone of the age. They want their freedom, just as the others want it, but they keep a level-headed grip on themselves and do not throw away their opportunities or let their work engross all their energies. This comes from a sense of reality rather than from a sense of calculation, and most of all it comes from a sound instinct of femininity. Genuine intelligence has simple roots, and men admire the type of girl who is both modern and balanced. There are plenty of them.

No one can blame women for wishing to be free or for taking, to the full, advantage of a freedom which needed so many cen-

turies to acquire. But though some people seem to think that revolution for revolution's sake has a spiritual value—on the principle, I suppose, that a physical shake-up may enliven a sluggish digestion—my own opinion is that the value of a movement depends on the ultimate worth of any results one can envisage. And so I feel that the real problem is whether women are now better off or whether their underground dominion of old was not, in actuality, more potent than their new equality before the law. In some directions their position has improved, but in other, and more imponderable, directions they have been the losers. The material advantages are plain enough; it is the immaterial things, the effect on their character and happiness, which are mostly in question. And, one may add, the effect on men of women's vociferous and heralded freedom.

The future must take care of itself and, of course, society will continue whatever fools we make of ourselves; but I must say I rather dread the time when women may demand, not alone equality with men, but superiority to men. In fact, legally and socially, they already have it to some extent, and one of these days anything may happen.

CHAPTER XXX

ENGLISH VERSUS AMERICAN WOMEN

IN comparing the women of two nations one tends instinctively to magnify the differences, partly because it sounds more dramatic and partly because there would be no particular point in comparing them at all were they too similar. English and American women *are* different from one another as a class, but they are all women, which is a still larger class than the national, and therefore at heart they are more like one another than unlike. By substituting some obvious words for those in the first line, one could make Kipling's couplet from *Barrack-Room Ballads* very applicable :—

For the colonel's lady an' Judy O'Grady
Are sisters under their skins.

But just as individual women differ from one another so profoundly that, without a sense of perspective, one would lose almost all hope of making even approximately true generalizations about them, so is it with the women of these two countries. One can only compare them broadly, while bearing in mind that the divergences which are noticeable, the universal divergences, are not so much bound up with personality as with racial experiences developed into a national outlook.

For instance, it is clear that American women have a more independent attitude towards men than English women. I do not mean that they do not rely on them just as much; what I mean is that they are able to compel attention from men by a general and accepted air of independence, if not indeed of superiority. And the curious thing is that though many American women appear to give the lie to this by being personally shy and quiet, yet underneath they *all* expect more from men than do English women and they *all* have a touch of the autocrat in their make-up. And if an American girl tells you she is an exception,

she may think she is, but she is not. Scratch the surface of even the most cultured and charming American woman and you will soon discover that. English women are hard enough, but American women are harder. And to an Englishman, at least, more incalculable in that they are more self-willed and therefore more wayward.

It may be argued that English women, however emancipated, carry with them inherited memories of the feudal system, whereas American women are the product of a pioneer age. I am a little frightened of those neat theories which simplify things so trimly, but the point has some truth. English women probably *are* handicapped, if it be a handicap, in that manner, while it has been remarked that the deference, amounting to sentimentality, with which American men treat women is a direct result of those days, not so long removed as time goes, when, say, twenty men would pierce into the wilderness accompanied by the wife of one of them, who shared their dangers and hardships, cheered them on, did the cooking and the mending, and in every way showed exceptional courage and endurance. No wonder that, one among many in such surroundings, she was placed upon a pedestal and that men came to regard all women as beings of a finer mould who must be cherished and exalted.

America is now one of the most civilized of countries, but society's attitude to women is tintured by even recent tradition, and the standing they have attained in the United States is not only as free as it is in England, but more genuinely recognized as being free. Through ingrained restraint or economic serfdom English women sometimes have to put up with a state of affairs that American women positively would not put up with. Conversely, many English women, by a display of tact and patience, eventually arrive at a happiness which American women are only too liable not to give themselves the time to arrive at.

And having once been placed on a pedestal, American women have seen to it that they remain there. That is only human nature, which jumps at all it can get without counting the cost. But as women of every nation are really most contented when they have some man to look up to as the provider and the protector,

an enormous number of American women suffer from a boredom from which English women, who expect less, are exempt. Of course, I am talking in very general terms, but they are the only applicable terms. In England, by and large, it is the spinsters who are searching for anodynes; in America, and especially perhaps in the vast spaces of the Middle West, married women are for ever trying to forget the sameness of their lives by attending literary lectures, by practising moral uplift, by busying themselves with local politics, or, in one direction or another, arranging a secondary, bustling existence to fill their empty hours.

Domesticity has lost its zest, because the husbands, being under their wives' thumbs, do exactly what they are told. The equality in partnership on which American women pride themselves has, in practice, resulted in women ordering everything to do with the social side of things. The wife, and the wife alone, arranges the joint activities, and though this may give her apparent satisfaction it breeds a hopeless ennui. There are no novel surprises for her, because she plans the surprises; there is no creative, friendly clash of wills, because hers is the only will. In the upshot, the pleasures of Americans, particularly the pleasures men steal for themselves, incline to be fevered, and the golf clubs and the country clubs are as animated as Main Street is drab.

There are so many labour-saving devices in the American home that the average middle-class American woman, who keeps one domestic servant or perhaps none, has probably more time on her hands than the average middle-class English woman. And as most American husbands earn more than English husbands of the same grade, she has also more money to spend. But I doubt whether she enjoys herself as much. The English woman may be dissatisfied with her lot, but her husband is of perennial interest to her, because, as she does not dictate to him habitually, his personality is allowed freer rein and he can still amuse and even, on rare occasions, instruct her.

There is, I think, more individual liberty in England than in America, but there is more true democracy in America than in England. And that democratic spirit, being part of the heritage of every American, gives women a position of equality which is

inherent in the genius of the country. Add this to the fact that they are already on a pedestal for another reason, and it becomes evident why they take for granted what English women have to struggle for. Their position in the American scheme is completely secure.

People's characters, as their appearance, are in part influenced by the climate and the configuration, as well as by the history, of their countries. The English woman, living in a smallish island, where conditions are more or less the same throughout and where extremes of heat and cold are not usually very marked, has, with her centuries of background to aid her, a certain balance which the American woman does not have. And maybe a certain serenity deriving from the restful beauty of the land, which is so different from anything in America. But whatever the reason, the Americans are more highly strung than the English, and their women, in consequence, more energetic, even if more erratic, than their English sisters. If from this cause alone, they would insist on playing a bigger part than English women are accustomed to play.

It may be men's own fault if, in one way of speaking, America is a country ruled by women; but, on the other hand, American women have such keen wits and such immense vitality that it would have been excessively difficult to keep them in any sort of subjection. There is no one so full of life as an American girl. The very size of the country, with all its teeming opportunities, affords her confidence, and she goes out to front the world with the knowledge that it is waiting to accept her with open arms. The English girl has, in most cases, little enough to look forward to, but the American girl is frankly optimistic.

And she is entitled to be. The American debutante is a national institution, and everybody vies in giving her a gay time and showering her with adulation. And she is usually so pretty, so well-made, and with such a style in clothes that one can scarcely help treating her as a queen; while she is so certain of herself, and has her feet so firmly planted on the earth, that one feels she is beyond being spoilt. Well, "spoilt" is a relative word; from the American point of view she is only demanding, and demanding

with all imaginable grace, what is hers ; from the English point of view, delightful as she may be, she is altogether too much in the limelight. We would not like our daily papers to be filled up with columns about girls who are "coming out," but the Americans evidently like it, for that is what happens there. The English girl is educated to be retiring, the American girl to be assured. One has to snatch her opportunities, the other's opportunities are ready-prepared for her.

And yet with it all I am not sure that American women, once they are past the first flood of their youth, lead such rounded lives as do English women. Perhaps things are made too easy for them to begin with, perhaps they exercise too much power later. English women tend to mellow with the years, American women tend to stagnate, and though there are—need one emphasize such a truism ?—countless exceptions to both statements, the generalization stands up fairly well. Possibly it is inevitable. Happiness is in the mind (another truism), and as American women are always experimenting with new sensations, they seem to lose that sense of freshness which English women, living in a more circumscribed manner, often maintain into old age.

But, as I say, one must not exaggerate the differences or allow them to blind one to the truth that though such differences may be inherent, they are not necessarily very deep. Both America and England have some rootedly false notions about one another, and some of these notions centre on their women. To give one example : the Americans think English girls dowdy ; the English think American girls pert. But many English girls are exquisitely dressed and the pertness of many American girls is only bubbling spirits. If the two peoples mingled more freely they would readjust their views, and the girls of both countries would be seen for what they really are, not problems in national psychology but, first and last, young women longing to savour existence. And in the nature of things young women, whether in London or New York, hold the stage, blatantly or demurely, by right of their femininity and youth. As Reynolds, that shadowy dramatist of other days, wrote in *The Will* (and here again one might alter or, rather, add to the first line) :—

As for the women, though we scorn and flout 'em,
We may live with, but cannot live without 'em.

This is a remark which would be echoed equally by the American and the Englishman. For American men, as American women, are human beings before they are anything else, and, sex being international, all youthful loveliness is their joy. And in case the first line of the quotation seems to contradict what I said previously about the American man's attitude to women, I hasten to add that while American men do allow themselves to be domineered by women and do cultivate a philosophy of admiration, yet they often rebel in secret. An American husband may rush home with endearing words on his lips and a box of candy in his hand, and in every way be more attentive in small galantries than the average English husband, but at the same time he may be carrying on an amorous affair with his stenographer. (True, his English counterpart may be carrying on a similar affair with *his* typist, but then his home manners never having been so genially effusive, his double-dealing should excite less comment.)

It is odd to think that in America, where women have such an unrivalled position, divorce is probably more prevalent than in any other occidental country. This, no doubt, is partially to be accounted for by the tedium which overcomes women who are constantly "bossing" their spouses, but it is also partially to be accounted for by men's dislike of eternally playing second fiddle. American men being, at once, idealistic and realistic about women, as they are about most things, are always hoping to do better for themselves next time; they have not yet learnt that to-morrow never comes.

Perhaps if divorce were as easy in England as it is in America, perhaps if the country were of a like size, so that one could start life again in a different region, English men and women would give more scope to their fancies, but somehow I do not think that the English temperament is so sanguine. In the blood of Americans there flows a perennial youth, the heritage of the New World, but the inhabitants of Europe are born disillusioned.

Talking of marriage and divorce, I wonder why it is that though

many American women marry Englishmen with considerable success, relatively few English women marry Americans and, when they do, failure is frequently the result. (The war has changed this, but that is only temporary and, anyhow, the resulting American-British marriages do not appear to be particularly auspicious.) Of course, opportunity must account a good deal for the first, for more American girls travel to England than English girls to the States; but as for the second, one would have thought that it would have been just the reverse. American men are more considerate to women than are Englishmen, and apparently make—at least, while the marriage lasts—better husbands, and yet they do not seem to please English girls as much as Englishmen please American girls. But I suspect the solution is to be found in national characteristics: the American girl is adaptable; the English girl is set.

Motherhood is revered in England, but it is worshipped in America. In England it would be impossible to organize such an event as "Mother's Day" without ridicule, but in America it is an honoured yearly celebration. For the English are self-conscious about sentiment, whereas the Americans revel in it. At any rate, that is how it looks outwardly, but it is only half the story. If the English conceal all sorts of astute calculations under a guarded exterior, the Americans know how to use the emotionalism of their countrymen to business advantage. Americans may glory in "Mother's Day" and for a few hours long to be back in the old homestead, but with that humorous cynicism which is ever jogging their elbows, they firmly believe the whole thing to have originated with the telegraph companies and the florists. (A sensible deduction; about fifteen years ago, when they were trying to hoist also a "Father's Day" on the Americans, I saw this sign outside a New York flower shop: "Father's Day: this includes Grandfathers, Fathers-in-Law, Stepfathers"—very comprehensive and commercial.) Nevertheless "Mother's Day" causes much satisfaction to American mothers and is, in essence, a sign of the kindliness of the Americans. But English mothers, too, are made happy by their children's love. It is all a matter of expression.

In every respect England is more homogeneous than America, and this is very endangering to the truth of generalizing comparisons. And yet, despite the fact that in the South womanhood is even more triumphant than in the North, and that in the West women are more direct than in the East, it is, so far as my observation goes, accurate to say that all American women regard the destiny of English women with a kind of pity. They like Englishmen, for they are quaintly different from Americans, but in their very liking they are sorry for English women, who, poor things, have evidently never learnt how men ought to be treated. The English male casualness is refreshing for a change, especially when the smile is pleasant and the clothes are well cut; but even when an American girl consents to marry an Englishman, she invariably intends to educate him up to American standards of behaviour. And yet, for some obscure reason which goes beyond that adaptability of which I spoke, the American wife of an Englishman will at times become more English than the English. Can it be a voiceless memory calling to her out of the past?

A handsome woman is, naturally, as much a force in England as in America, but while a plain English girl has an uphill battle in overcrowded England, a plain American girl will receive her meed of flattery and entertainment simply because she is a female. But I rather fear that this, in conjunction with her American pride in herself, must often let her down. It reminds me of the hare and the tortoise—the American girl being the hare. The plain English girl plods along until she reaches the winning-post (if she be lucky); the plain American girl prances about in the (sometimes false) assurance that she can start running whenever she wants to.

Actually, American girls are no more bumptious than English girls; it is their tradition, their upbringing, their sparkle which make them appear so to the English. As a matter of fact, most Americans are modest as individuals, just as most English are unaffected; but the boundless exuberance of the Americans and the Oxford accent of the English absurdly deceive the other. In an alien setting contrasts are more evident than likenesses, and to

know either English or American women one must observe them at home.

Whether I be right or wrong in my deductions, it is certain that such a comparison as I have attempted might be potentially useful. For nationality is one of the fatal barriers to understanding, and yet nationality is merely a varnish on human nature.

CHAPTER XXXI

WOMEN IN WAR-TIME

IN the recent crucial years, when the skies of the world were red and all the values of civilization had come to their testing-point, it is clear that to understand the woman of the present age one must study her attitude to the question of war.

One might suppose that instinctively all women would be such convinced pacifists that no contrary appeal would have the slightest effect on them, for what seems more futile than to produce life only to have it destroyed young, and who abominates bloodshed more than a woman? And yet in practice this is not the case. Other factors come into play, factors latent in a woman's very idea of manhood and its responsibilities, and I believe that the proportion of pacifists is no larger among women than among men. The peace-at-any-price woman, whose position may be summed up by that song of other days, "I didn't raise my boy to be a soldier," is a rarer phenomenon than the woman who, in an access of hatred of her country's foes, would willingly exterminate them all.

Women, as a class, take sides with the heartiness of their extremist natures and are ever ready to lend themselves to ardent propaganda. In the first World War, before conscription was brought in, the Government posters urgently appealed to girls to induce their young men to enlist, and evidently the psychology was sound, for what girl did not glow with patriotism when preaching the crusade or distributing white feathers? Some of their actions may not in themselves have exhibited a very attractive phase of womanliness, but they all went to show that war, once started, has no keener upholders than those very women whose whole happiness is being jeopardized by the jeopardy to their men.

The truth, as I perceive it, is not only that women are just as capable of unselfish fervour as men and, when in that state, allow

their exaltation to drown their shrinking from death and their horror of mutilation, but that they derive a primitive kind of pride from seeing their men in the guise of warriors and visualizing them as their defenders. Man has always been a fighting animal and woman has always cheered him on. The picture of a Lady with a Lamp, whose privilege it is to heal the wounded and comfort the sick, is only half-complete; the other half is a Lady with a Flag, whose duty it is to encourage the waverer and incite the soldier to deeds of valour.

It was Lilia, in Tennyson's poem of *The Princess*, who "clapt her hands and cried for war," and though the modern woman is not such a fool as to clap, yet in her stoicism she follows the same road—follows it, I repeat, even when her own nearest and dearest may be involved and the sunlight about her darkened for ever. I admit that there are mothers who would go to almost any length to save their sons from the hazards of conflict, but there are many more mothers who would feel ashamed if their sons did not act their part and share those hazards. Primarily, I dare say, this is due to a patriotic feeling of self-sacrifice; but it is also due to their conviction that a man, when called upon, must prove his manhood. Women despise cowardice in a man almost more than anything else, and it is indeed, as Conrad declared, the last thing a woman will credit of the man she loves.

Furthermore, in the ordinary way—that is to say, unless principles are ineradicably involved or helplessness is too overwhelming—no woman can bear to have the finger of scorn pointed at any man for whom she feels responsible. She can brace herself to parting from him; she cannot brace herself to seeing him despised. She is persuaded that in losing caste he will lose everything, and in spurring on a husband or a son she believes that she is saving his soul even at the forfeiture of his life.

For everything with women comes back finally to the personal equation. They may be stirred by the same emotions as stir men, but these emotions are directly hooked up with individuals. War, for example, gives women a very special opportunity for proving their zeal and their desirability, and women jump at such opportunities. They feel that, in the usual course, men can do

without them much of the time, but that in war, whether as participants or onlookers, their value rises. They are there to help, to entertain, to bring blessed refreshment and blessed forgetfulness. War may create moral laxity of a sort, but it also creates chivalry. The soldier thinks of himself as defending not alone his country but his womenfolk, and though home life may have been a bit of a bore, war, for the most part, is so much more boring that he returns to his home with awakened enthusiasm. Whatever segregates the sexes makes sex more alluring.

Another thing to be noted is that bitterness sinks deeper into women than into men and that, when their hatred has been aroused, it is almost inappeasable. History tells us how often it was the women of a ruined cause who fanned the dying flame, and though women lack the stamina of men, they have, if anything, more determination. They hate, as they love, with their whole being, and so recognized is it that their passions are concentrated that Kipling's line about the female of the species being more deadly than the male has become one of the most quoted in the language. Women neither give nor ask quarter.

Despite their personal indirectness, women are direct in their approach to national issues, and it is, for most of them, no effort to echo in all circumstances: "My country, right or wrong." The sceptical subtlety of their intelligence is concerned more with persons than with problems, and in their willing acceptance of authority, where grave affairs of State are in the balance, they are a source of strength to any resolute Administration. In all such matters women tend to take the popular, which is so often the right, view, and I think that the bulk of them are more inherently what is commonly called conservative—*i.e.*, conventional—than the bulk of men. Certainly, granting women the vote has not had the devastating results numbers of people prophesied it would have.

That convenient but destructive proverb, so long the mainstay of amorists and brutes, "All's fair in love and war," is automatically regarded by professional moralists, whose one-track minds glower through their gimlet eyes, as having been shamefully altered to "All love is fair in war" the moment hostilities begin. But first

of all, one must guard against exaggeration and, secondly, one must consider the causes. If war does make a special type of woman more reckless, not only are the temptations more abundant but there is a new excitement everywhere. From that sense of changing values and relaxed inhibitions sex is not immune. Hence the scenes engendered by revivalist meetings. Things are now allowed, even to so trifling an innovation as the wearing of slacks, which would have been frowned upon a few years ago, and there is a fresh interpretation of freedom in the air. If the average girl responds to her country's call just as fully as the average youth, she also responds, according to her character, to the wilder spirit of the hour.

Then, again, it has been argued that women have a stronger urge to propagate their species in periods of war, so that the population may be maintained despite unnatural depletion. I dare say that this is fundamentally true and may account for all sorts of things, but if so its force has assuredly lost the original drive. Few women nowadays are sufficiently carried away even by a war to let their instincts triumph over their caution. Life's purpose may remain, but the current turns awry.

And finally—to omit those pathological cases where the idea of danger acts as an aphrodisiac—it is obvious that the danger implicit in war kindles the compassion of women to a remarkable degree. They want to do all they can for the men who may be lost to them so soon, and to sacrifice themselves with glad completeness is their tribute to the larger sacrifices demanded of men. Any man in uniform is likely to be attractive to a girl, because it gives him the status of a hero. Through women's long experience men's bravery is so essential to their well-being that the suggestion inherent in martial attire makes them anxious to stint men nothing.

Of course, as I warned before, it is absurd to exaggerate, as is so frequently done, the purely sex angle of this, for the majority of women reveal their gratitude and their pity in other ways altogether, but nevertheless it is tied up with the problem. Just as thousands of young people marry before they would otherwise marry because of a war, feeling that perhaps if they do not taste of happiness now they may never taste of it, so thousands of young

people, it may be assumed, indulge in illicit sex experiences of which they would otherwise fight shy. But sex standards are largely relative.

Because women do rely, as I have said, so much on men's courage and strength, they are rather inclined to pretend that they themselves are cowards, thereby stimulating men's protectiveness. But the truth is that a surprising proportion of women are physically brave. Needless to remark, they are not all brave, any more than are all men, but the number is far larger than men suspect. Or perhaps I ought to say "did suspect," because when everyone was in the front line more or less, as during the late War, women came out in their true colours. In the past they had fewer chances than men of showing courage, though, in actuality, they have always been unflinching in the imminence of peril—think of the historical examples who stand out from the multitude of the unknown—but in those days of death from the sky at any instant their undauntedness shone with a steady beam. Utmost trial did not find them wanting, either as rescue workers or as ordinary civilians, and even frail and nervous women exhibited creative heroism in the shadow of disaster.

I wonder whether the behaviour of British women in the recent war, glorious in its victory over fear, weariness, and discomfort, has not done more for them than any change in public opinion or Act of Parliament has so far accomplished. May not men have acquired a respect for women which has, in some manner not yet fully apparent, a new significance? But future events seldom take the shape one visualizes, and perhaps, now that the storm and stress are over, men's gratitude will gradually be masked under a kind of shyness and they will want women to revert to an even more feminine femininity. I should not be entirely surprised; nor should I be entirely surprised if women fell in with such wishes: they know where their ultimate power and their ultimate satisfaction lie. All the same, I fancy that there *will* be a difference, though it may not be outwardly startling or immediately evident, and that, as in its material values so in its spiritual, the social scene will be somehow amplified.

We now admit that women can display a constancy and fortitude

equal to those displayed by men, and that those females in uniform who belonged to one or another of the numerous women's corps fully learnt the necessity of discipline. But nevertheless women had to prove themselves before the generality of people took them very seriously. This is the price they paid for being regarded as ornaments rather than workers. It used to be stated, with facile cynicism, that it is easy enough to get girls to volunteer if you offer them a uniform; but putting aside the fact that this applies only to a rather meretricious type, it seems to suggest that youths are not similarly affected. But many of them are; uniform helps their self-esteem and is, as I have remarked, a password to women. Danger and decoration are two of the unfailing baits, and if a girl chooses to argue that, in like fashion, uniform will help her morale and make her sought after, why should she not?

Moreover, women wanted to be "in the swim," wanted to know that they were helping their country in her need as men were helping it. The war, which upset so many things, upset the routine of innumerable women. Some of them, of course, discovered that it gave them all sorts of frivolous chances, but others discovered a verity which had hitherto evaded them. They were keyed up to a pitch where their customary feminine background faded into nothing and they ceased to worry about the complexities which once obsessed them.

For one must remember that while women are inherently realistic in their approach to life, their feminine temperament frequently blinds their eyes to simplicity and makes them see things in a distorted light. And yet, though they cultivate this temperament as a means of expressing themselves or of escaping from unpleasant facts, their realism often makes them revolt against it in secret; and so they find a definite relief in being able, to a large extent, to throw it aside in a national emergency. The Amazonian spirit is hardly less native to women than the coquettish, and if in civilian ease they may like to look as mysterious as Mona Lisa, when they have a duty to perform they try to be as competent as Mrs. Poyser. They can discard their temperament, in its extremer manifestations, as readily as they can discard a coat.

And perhaps that is why, being very adaptable into the bargain,

as witness the manner in which a girl, on her marriage, can take over the running of a strange house with calm efficiency, they can accommodate themselves so quickly and thoroughly to the conditions of war. Lacking the glib optimism of men, they are not particularly dismayed by catastrophic happenings, and, however much they may enjoy the whirl of normal life, their having to relinquish all they have hitherto valued does not chafe them intolerably. They never had any marked faith in the permanency of their lot and therefore they were always more or less ready for anything.

Many of them, in fact, were war to come again, would not particularly mind if they were drafted straight into the fighting forces and compelled to take their place beside men. After all, they can drive and manipulate most machines as competently as men, and they might welcome the chance of slaying their abhorred enemies. This may not be agreeable to contemplate, but perhaps it is only a middle-aged prejudice. For if, speaking roughly, the motivating cause of war throughout the centuries has constantly changed its complexion—from conquest to religion, from religion to nationalism, from nationalism to economics, from economics to ideas—may it not be said that the character of wars, as the range of their force, has steadily grown more violent and more universal? No individual can stand aloof to-day, and if a woman is to be bombed while minding a child or cooking a dinner, why should not other women try to avenge such atrocities?

Although women's achieved freedom has made them more politically conscious, I am not inclined to think that it has added to their patriotism, for the sufficient reason that they always have been patriotic and prepared to acknowledge their country's claim on them, even if in the past it was mainly a passive claim. One side of their nature recoils from war, the other quickens to the beat of drums. Being born partisans, they are mentally always in the van; in most women there is a touch both of the spartan and of the leader. Women such as Joan of Arc and Queen Elizabeth achieved the niche they did because they represented something deep in the spirit of their respective countries and generations.

They were successful in that they fearlessly voiced and inspired nationalistic waves. And in these late fateful years the women of all free lands were fired by some breath of the faith and resolution of their great exemplars.

Altogether, it may be said that though women loath the beastliness and the waste of war, they are no more averse to it, once war breaks out, than the usual run of men. They are, in brief, more ready for sacrifice than for compromise.

CHAPTER XXXII

WHAT WOMEN REALLY WANT

IF one asks oneself, What do women want out of life ?, I suppose the simplest answer would be : Something they do not know or something they know they cannot get. But that illustrates the subject no more than Anatole France's definition of mankind's fate : they were born, they suffered, and they died. In other words, it is true in one sense, but it is not the whole truth, and even if it were, it would not explain what it is they do not know or cannot get.

But even if one give it the widest latitude, it is inevitably the type of question which annoys women, who intensely dislike being regarded as a class and not as individuals, although they invariably fall back on their sex when it suits their convenience. This is largely the fault of men, who have a tactless habit of trotting out generalities to account for incalculable feminine moods or behaviour. Women resent generalizing of this nature, though they themselves do a good deal of generalizing about men, and one can sympathize with Mrs. Viveash's outburst in Aldous Huxley's *Antic Hay* : " Or are you one of those imbeciles who speak of women with a large W and pretend we're all the same ? "

The obvious truth is surely that women, in the same manner as men, are both individuals and a class. And one can discuss them as either, provided one does not lose sight of the factor one is not discussing. All women, for example, do not, as individuals, have the same goal in life, but all women, as females, have the same sort of vague dissatisfaction with things as they are. They may be feminists or they may be anti-feminists or they may never have given the matter a thought ; but one and all of them regard the world as peculiarly imperfect so far as women are concerned, and one and all of them are looking for a kind of harmony which they know they will never discover.

It is not the kind of harmony a man wants, for a man's idea of harmony is usually bound up with some woman, whereas a woman's idea of harmony is curiously divorced from sex, but in its indefiniteness it is entirely feminine. A woman yearns for the sort of peace which carries with it no responsibility, for a life which makes no demands upon her; and yet, in her very yearning, she is aware that she is asking for the moon. The woman who would be miserable without her husband and children and who revels in society is just the type of woman whose fancies are liable to be almost conventual in their hushed quietude.

It might be argued with a fair show of truth that such fancies are only a reaction from over-worry or overwork, and that in reality a much more universal wish is to be, let us say, a competent housekeeper and a happy mother; but I do not think that, in the ultimate meaning, this is so. No doubt any activity carried too far does create its own reactions, and no doubt most women do want to manage their careers well; but behind all that, so deep in their minds as to border on the unconscious, there is a longing for that fullness of ease in which there will be no more explanations and no more misunderstandings, and where their nerves will at last be given a chance.

For what exhausts a woman finally, what makes her want to escape into a vacuum, is not so much the turmoil of the world as the feeling that she is hideously alone in the midst of its noise and clamour. With one lobe of their brains women are glad that men do not understand them; with the other they wish to heaven men were less hopelessly dense. Things are made so unnecessarily difficult for women that they pray for an existence in which they will not have to practise those feminine arts on which they most pride themselves.

Indeed they visualize, as a last resort, a universe from which the complications of sex have been eliminated. And this includes, very definitely, the rivalries of sex. In short, they visualize a universe in which they will be invincibly surrounded by inner and outer tranquillity. Above all, they want to be free of their devouring sense of duty to their families and from the stranglehold of those ties which, year by year, grow about their hearts to such

an extent that pain and pleasure are inextricably mixed in their whole emotional outlook. It is not that anything would induce them to give them up, but only that they dream of a state of being in which they are released, without a pang, from all their obligations and all the inhibitions of sex itself.

Of course, women want to be admired and loved and to feel the fragrance and the pulse of life; but in the very intensity of this passing phase, the desire for peace is gaining ground. And this desire is perhaps the greater in that they know it to be a delusion. Were they alone in a desert they would not be quit of themselves, and should they be queens upon their thrones torturing thoughts would yet be their companions.

Moreover, if they had the magic word that could accomplish all for which they have longed they would not speak it. The ideal must not be brought about through their volition, but come of its own accord in some imaginary and impossible set of circumstances. It is not alone that what they crave for is immediately beyond their reach, but that it will always be beyond their reach.

And yet their craving is a genuine one and not merely the idle fancy of an idle hour. Genuine and universal. They crave to relax, in their special interpretation of the word; they hanker after a state of affairs in which they could afford to be completely themselves. And though they admit that such a vision is doomed to disappointment, they never quite see why this should be so. For they argue that if only men were sensible and did not perpetually force them into corners where they have to scheme and practise dissimulation, existence would be much more tolerable. In their opinion men complicate everything unnecessarily, and that is why, despite their reliance on men and their need of men, they find relief in picturing a manless society.

This may sound sufficiently odd, considering that most women prefer the company of men to that of their own sex and that many women trust them more, but it is no use judging female consistency from a male standpoint. And, after all, men sometimes wish to get away from women, the difference being that with them it is not a philosophic, but a momentary, attitude. To read women aright one must perceive that even the most sensual of

them, even those happiest in their balanced sensuality, have a distrust of sex. It lies for ever in wait for them, and though they may both enjoy it and owe their success to it, yet they feel that it puts them in a dangerous and invidious position. They revolt against the very force they encourage.

But to generalize about women's thoughts is doubly foolhardy. They can give a meaning to their sentences which may totally mislead us when we think we are following them, and precisely similar remarks made by a man and a woman may not imply at all the same thing. For women have inflexions of their own, a sort of *patois* concealed within our common language, and were some of their aims, some of their most precious aims, explained to men in words of one syllable, they would still be incomprehensible to them. For such aims hold an inner significance known only to women and never disclosed by women. As that clever novelist, Anne Bridge, makes one of her men characters say in *Peking Picnic*: "Women have their own way of knowing one another, and their own things to know, that we don't get at."

This, of course, accounts for many of the apparent contradictions in the character of women. They have their own values, which are not those of men, and if these values often seem to be at war with one another, the answer—at any rate, part of the answer—is that we have not properly grasped them and therefore cannot follow the process of reasoning. For instance, though women do hunger for a life of peace, they also hunger for a life of power. To some extent, naturally, this depends on the mood; but the two things are not contradictory to a woman because she feels that it is only when she is at peace; and therefore mistress of herself, that she can exercise her full power.

We are always being informed that the lust for power outlives all other passions in a man, but it is not so widely recognized that with women, too, the lust for power grows with advancing years. And yet it is easy enough to understand. Power is the last rampart of their crumbling fortress, and when they can no longer charm, they can domineer. And how they do domineer! Countless dear old ladies are the matriarchs of their families, ruling them with rods of iron hidden in the folds of their black satin dresses.

They may be ancient and weary, their faces may be grey with pain, but the reins of power are gripped convulsively in their trembling hands.

I mentioned love as a thing all women desire at one time of their career, and I would add that the very instinct of love is allied to a sense of power. It is not only sweet for a woman to feel the arms of her lover around her; it is sweet to know that her power has utterly possessed him. And even those tiffs, which so frequently end in a man taking all the blame and begging for forgiveness, are a witness to her authority. His happiness is in her hands; with one word she can cast down or exalt.

Indeed, in all stages of their lives women court power, even if it be only of the passive kind. In their femininity they have a weapon which brings them conquest, and in their social aspirations an impulse which drives them to success. And even when a woman dismisses a man, she hates to lose all her power over him and would prefer to think that he would not look at another woman. She never quite lets go, in her mind, of a former "flame." Such a one may mean less than nothing to her, she may not recall his name once a year, but the captured scalp remains a captured scalp and some little glow about him lingers in the well of her consciousness. And though the ending may have been miserable and tormented, this little glow will often begin to shine after long years, for memory deals mercifully with the past, and in time it is the happiness which is remembered rather than the unhappiness.

And it is not beyond possibility that her extreme violence towards the man who has repelled her advances, or grown tired before she did, may be bound up with a sense of frustrated power. What right has any man to challenge a woman's mastery! It is correct to say that no woman can bear a blow to her pride; but her wounded pride may be less an instinct of outraged dignity than a feeling that her power has been challenged and overthrown. This probably depends on the case and the individual, but we must not lose sight of the fact that women's motives are apt to be extremely mixed and that the ostensible reasons for their conduct may not be the only, or even the strongest, reasons. In fact, they may not be the true reasons at all.

And nearly all women—especially, as I pointed out in another chapter, women with children—covet security. Men, with their volatile romanticism and their eye for a pretty face, are constantly undermining a woman's feeling of safety, and perhaps it is in her longing for security that is born the double desire for peace and power. A woman's ceaseless efforts to fortify her position and to provide for the future are, in essence, a sign of her scepticism about men. And so, perchance, is her sleepless curiosity about them, a curiosity which is both zestful and fearful. She believes she can never be at rest until, through a reorganization of society, she has put a definite curb upon men's natural proclivities.

But sometimes women get so worried and muddled that they scarcely know what they want, although they do know—let me repeat it—that it is something totally different from anything they have. There are occasions when, perhaps for no specific reason, all turns to bitterness in a woman's mind—her husband, her children, her friends, her home. She feels that somewhere, somehow, there must be a solution to her problems, but, apart from a sense of profound dissatisfaction, she could hardly name what her problems are. Such a state resembles those nightmares in which the earth is full of so appalling, aching a boredom that death would be almost preferable.

Women are convinced day-dreamers, and their dreams may take them anywhere. The young girl dreams of love and so attunes herself to fall in love with the first lad who comes along; the older woman dreams of peace and so grows moody in the face of reality. No doubt this is often to reverse the order of events, but it is usual enough to account for much that is queer about women. And particularly is this so in that a woman's dearest wishes have a voiceless quality which requires no verbal definition; in her busiest hours she can retire momentarily into some secret chamber of her heart. Dreams of this sort can be perilous guides, and the woman who indulges in them too freely may find that she is leading a completely dual life of the spirit.

And in truth many women, as they grow older, do tend to lead that sort of dual life. They may be worldly women, seeking to divert themselves from hour to hour; they may be maternal

women, trying to hold on to youth through their children; but in the silence of their own rooms their dreams are their protection against time. And time for a woman, far more even than for a man, has the aspect of a relentless foe. And though women are, as a rule, too realistic to fool themselves into believing that they can circumvent time, nevertheless through their dreams they are able to visualize a world in which time shall be of small account. A world where, freed from desire and worry, they can at last make their real influence felt.

For one of the things for which women pray is perfection. As they will take infinite pains about their toilette, omitting nothing at whatever trouble, so each task they put their hands to must be performed as perfectly as possible. They hate the type of mind which produces scamped work. Their children must outshine other children, their houses must be just so, their daily routine must have an ordered purposefulness. To a woman's view a man is nearly always untidy in himself and in his ideas, and one of the crosses she has to bear is his everlasting failure to acknowledge his shortcomings in these directions. It is her duty to mould him, and he will *not* be moulded! Men are not so appreciative of this activity as their wives and other female relatives consider they ought to be, but then they little realize to what an extent this feature of femininity is interwoven with a woman's picture of a harmonious society.

In the thoughts of most of us things have to conform to patterns, both visual and emotional, and as the significance of these patterns is entirely personal, they are very difficult to explain convincingly, although for those concerned they have a real importance. And outside our patterns, as individuals, we have certain others, as men or women, which must always be extremely obscure to the opposite sex. I do not think that this is sufficiently allowed for, but I think it *has* to be allowed for if, being men, we want to understand women.

And of course, apart from what I have mentioned, there are countless other things which women want, and want badly, but they can all be more or less fitted into the framework of the feminine pattern as given. At least, that is how I read it. What

they dread most of all perhaps is an aimless existence, an existence without an horizon ; and though many of them do live aimless lives in actuality, yet they are buoyed up by their dreams which, however vague, have invariably an end in view that spells salvation. Christianity, with its promise of an immortal life where there shall be neither marrying nor giving in marriage, helps many ; but it is probable that to-day even more are helped by the vision of an ideal world on this planet, wherein women, entering upon their own, shall take their rightful place in majesty and calm.

And so, from one angle, what women really want is to eat their cake and have it ; as Karl Marx, who was not given to flippancies, wrote, it is in their nature to demand the impossible. They want, in brief, the homage of men and the good things it brings them, but they also want an improved society in which sex, as such, shall not be the final arbiter. If men are to remain men, women must develop into more than women.

